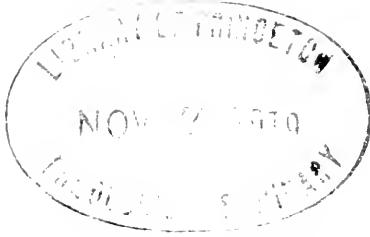


THE LITERARY STYLE OF
THE PROPHETIC BOOKS
OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE
DAVID HENRY KYES

STUDIES IN LITERATURE



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THE LITERARY STYLE OF
THE PROPHETIC BOOKS
OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

BY
DAVID HENRY KYES, PH.D.

Studies in literature.



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TO
MY WIFE
COMPANION, HELPER, INSPIRATION
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

PREFATORY NOTE

THE object of the following Dissertation is to examine and discuss the literary setting and the essential qualities of the style of the Prophetic Books in the English Bible with special reference to Rhetoric and Figures of Speech.

The basis of the study is the text of the standard Authorized King James Version of 1611, as originally printed. It is followed in all respects, only the poetic passages are so arranged as to bring out the rhythm and versification.

The scope of this Dissertation does not include the discussion of questions of Higher Criticism. Such questions are treated only to the extent that seems to be necessary to a correct understanding of literary structure and style.

Although not especially prepared for a text in Bible study, this book is admirably suited as a guide in the study of the Prophecies. With the help of the foot-notes such a study might be extended almost indefinitely.

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INTRODUCTION

THE ancestry and environment of its writers profoundly influence a nation's literary product. Geographical, historical and political conditions, early home-life, mental tendencies and religious conceptions, affect a man's writings. A course in the history and geography of a nation very appropriately precedes the study of its literature.

Bed-rock principles revealed to them by God were the basis of the work of the Old Testament Prophets. In rearing the superstructure, however, environment profoundly modified results. The cloudless skies, the rugged contour of the country, the simple pursuits of the people, furnished suggestions for the multitude of figures of speech found in the prophetic writings. The interests of God's Kingdom were constantly on their minds. Hence a river, lake, mountain, forest, a threshing floor or a stable might be used to vivify their ideas.

The history of the literature of any nation teaches us that a strong national life has always provoked a potent literature. This is seen espe-

cially in the writings immediately following a successful war in which a nation has demonstrated its prowess and virility. The Augustan Age in Rome, following a series of military victories, contains the names of Horace, Ovid and Virgil. This marked the acme of Roman national life. The splendid nationality of England in the Age of Elizabeth was not entirely the result of successes in war. Discoveries, the Reformation and the Renaissance attested, however, to the fact. The names of Shakespeare, Spenser, Bacon and Sidney are the sufficient guarantee of a great literature at this time. In America the early colonies contained but few good writers. Other work seemed more important than that of literature. There were homes and a living to make and an independence to win. After 1820, when the idea of nationality was well established, the names of Longfellow, Emerson, Lowell and Motley appeared and with them a truly great and profound literature.

The rule illustrated above obtained with the Hebrew people. When a strong national life was anticipated and seemed sure, an Isaiah could exclaim in rapturous periods. A righteous and powerful king with even a pious minority in power, inspired the hope necessary to a great literature. During many such periods the national life hung in the balance. It had no better barometer than

the writings of a given period. The personality of the men coupled with social and political conditions were responsible for the weeping of Jeremiah as well as for the denunciations of Amos and Nahum. The lesser value of some of the minor prophecies is closely connected with the decline of Israel's national life. Haggai and Zephaniah rendered an abiding service to their constituency. This service hardly compares with the literary productions of Isaiah or Ezekiel. Most of the Prophets had a keen perception of the relation between faith and obedience and true success. This was not as W. Robertson Smith points out¹ the faith and obedience of an individual but that of a nation. The idea of individuality had not been worked out. One of the good effects of the Captivity and the breaking up of the nation was to promote this. It becomes prominent in the later Prophetic Writings and is a marked feature of Christ's utterances.

The Prophets were of the type of men to be profoundly moved by duty and a high sense of responsibility. As they were not merely predictors, but men who felt that they were the very mouth-pieces of God at an important epoch of the world's history, all their utterances were of a high order. The fate of millions was to be guided by their Writings. How important that their ex-

¹ "Prophets of Israel," p. 49 ff.

pression be the best of which they were capable.

The main difference between the true and the false Prophet was in the matter of conscientiousness in their work. The former was bent upon giving the people what God taught whether acceptable to them or not; the latter was bent upon pleasing the people and getting a following at all costs. The former had a high and holy purpose and worked to a plan; the latter used professionalism and necromancy to gain a hearing. The work of the former abides in noble records, while that of the latter has been relegated to the oblivion which it deserves.

A final modifying literary force is found in the mental temperament of the Prophets. The mentality of each was sufficiently cogent to give him a distinct personality. The message of each Prophet bears the stamp of a man. If some of their work was done in a state of ecstasy, it is no more than we might expect. Religious principles instead of being old and well-established, as with us, were new and untried. Men who lived near enough to God in these early days to know His will and receive an impelling force from His character, had a right to become ecstatic. Each true Prophet carried a giant's load of responsibility and work, and often the security of a Kingdom rested upon him.

THE LITERARY STYLE OF THE PROPHETIC
BOOKS OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

The Literary Style of the Prophetic Books of the English Bible

CHAPTER I

THE GROWTH AND DECLINE OF PROPHETIC POWER AND INFLUENCE

THE growth and the development of the Hebrew Prophet occupies a unique place in the religious life of the world. He was not as he is too often regarded, an impracticable, visionary, unearthly being. He was a part of our common humanity, with its points of weakness as well as of strength. If the age in which he lived had high regard for signs, omens, visions and dreams, his work was modified thereby. Only the fact of his walking closely with God and being very seriously impressed with the importance of his work kept him at times at his great task. His usefulness and influence with the common people were enhanced by the fact that, although he was a man, somehow the will of God was communicated to him.

Abraham, Moses and Samuel were the first

great Prophets of the chosen people. They had the trustful obedience and mighty faith which were the essential requisites of a Prophet. In the time of Samuel, however, the Seer held an important place. It has been claimed that the Seer represented the Godward side of revelation, perceiving or receiving the truth, while the Prophet represented the manward or uttering side.¹ This seems debatable. Surely none could be better judges of the time and manner of delivering truth, than those whose minds were filled with emotions while receiving it.

In the later monarchy the Seer was displaced almost entirely by the Prophet. The foregoing would establish the truth that if he was not the forerunner of the Prophet their works would overlap only a few centuries.²

The difference between the Seer and the Prophet was one of sacredness and comprehensiveness. In the early history of prophecy, before the scope of the Prophet's work was well-defined, the Seer flourished with his interpretations of signs and omens. He, however, did not have the statesman's grasp, the religious enthusiast's mysticism, or the Prophet's penetration.³

From the time of the later monarchy onward

¹ Schaff-Herzog Ency. of Religious Knowledge. Art. "Prophecy."

² *Idem.*

³ Hastings Bible Dic. Vol. IV, p. 108—"The date when the change of name from Seer to Prophet took place cannot be ascertained and the change itself is difficult to explain."

the name Prophet became common. Several elements contributed to make the Prophets and their work of more than passing importance:

(a) They were called generally against their wills. Although the pressure brought to bear upon them was moral and spiritual rather than physical, they could not but feel that it came from God.⁴

(b) The Prophet is the instrument through whom God reveals His will to Israel. (Jer. I:7, Ex. IV:15.) God talks with him (Jer. XXIII:18, Ezek. III:4) and reveals His purpose to him. He opens the Prophet's mouth (Ezek. III:27), answers his questions (Hab. II:1ff) and fills him with fury and indignation.⁵

(c) Men in the time of the Prophets, as well as to-day, believed that there was a Supreme Being; that the Supreme Being communicated with men; that these communications were not carried on indiscriminately but with certain men chosen of God, who felt it their duty to communicate them to others.⁶

These beliefs came to have a wonderful influence in the development of Prophecy. The true Prophet realized when he had received special directions from God. This gave him confidence in the declaration of his message. He felt that

⁴ Schaff-Herzog Ency. of Religious Knowledge. Art. "Prophet."

⁵ Ency. Biblica. Art. "Prophetic Literature."

⁶ Hastings' Bible Dic. Vol. IV, p. 107.

he could make no mistake for he was uttering the words of Jehovah who is infallible. (Amos IV:2, Hos. V:9, Is. XVII:24, Jer. I:11, Ezek. XII:28.)⁷ He ascribed all extraordinary manifestations to God, as well as the impulse to deliver or withhold the truth received. When this belief, because of miracles performed by the Prophets and the fulfillment of Prophecy, came to be shared by the common people, it gave the Prophets tremendous power. The word of the Prophets came to have such energy due to this cause that their pronounced woes brought speedy dismay to Israel. (Zech. I:6.)⁸ The Almighty slays or hews by the Prophets, and kingdoms are pulled down or set up by them (Jer. I:10); their special province is to deal with those not amenable to human authority. No matter whether the high or low are disturbed in their wickedness, the inexorable righteousness of God must be maintained.

In contrast to the false Prophets, the true Prophets were men of the highest honor. They felt that they held a sacred position between men and God and, like Jeremiah, would suffer intensely rather than violate this trust. In Amos III:7, we read:

“Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” Con-

⁷ Sec. 1, Ency. Biblica. Art. “Prophetic Literature.”

⁸ *Ibid.*

cerning God's guidance we read in Hosea XII:10,—“I have also spoken by the prophets and I have multiplied visions and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets”; also in Hosea XII:13,—“And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt and by a prophet was he preserved.”

Realizing their great power, and being filled with a peculiar sense of their high and holy mission both to God and men, the true Prophets refrained from no word or deed that would help mankind. They might forego social pleasure (Jer. XV:7) or family life (Jer. XIII:2) or even marry a harlot (Hosea I:2) if God so ordered. Because of this complete abandonment to God, He used them mightily, not only in their own age, but through their utterances in every age.

The fundamental idea that God had made a covenant with His chosen people—Israel—and called them to be separate from heathen nations, the Prophets would not and could not forget.⁹ From time to time the idea obtained in Israel that God was beholden to her; that He could not accomplish His purposes without her and that His honor must be sacrificed if she did not exist or prosper.¹⁰ This belief was the cause perhaps of her yielding so often to her besetting sin and running after heathen customs and superstitions. She did not at this time seem to have a proper

⁹ See A. B. Davidson, “Old Testament Prophecy,” p. 104.

¹⁰ See Ency. Biblica. Art. “Prophetic Literature.”

conception of the blessings and benefits to be obtained by obedience to her covenant with God. The distinctive and important work of the Prophets is done at this point.¹¹ They had the correct conception, that, for Israel's good, God wished that she would so conduct herself that He could accomplish His purposes for the world and humanity through her. They saw that God's purpose was to develop the ethical and spiritual ideas of the world through her. Yet they did not feel that God was beholden to the Israelites but that He had many means whereby He might carry out His far-reaching purposes if they were recreant to their part of the covenant.¹² The Prophets made themselves unpopular by declaring that when there was any estrangement between the Israelites and God, the Israelites were at fault. Unpopularity, however, did not turn them from what they believed to be their duty. Nor did they become narrow in the performance of it. On the other hand, they were ever engaged in modifying and adapting the old truths to new conditions and circumstances. They were constantly standing for the advance of everything that strengthened the personal and national life of Israel.¹³ By living close to God and studying institutions of the past,

¹¹ See Expositors Bible, Vol. I. Minor Prophets. p. 44-50. Also Ency. Biblica. Art. "Prophetic Literature."

¹² *Ibid.* "Minor Prophets." Vol. I, p. 50.

¹³ See Ency. Biblica. Art. "Prophetic Literature."

they were able to read the signs of the times far in advance of the common people. They saw that God's ultimate goal was to beget in the minds of His people high spiritual and ethical standards. This they constantly maintained. Even when they were successful in their undertakings, the true Prophets did not depart from their one work of keeping God and His standards in the forefront. They felt that God had minute charge of the affairs of this world, and the only true success for themselves and Israel was in following His guidance minutely. To aid Israel in doing this, they aimed constantly to eradicate heathenism and heathenish conceptions from her mind.

The Prophets were an effective force in the centralization of the national life of Israel. In the time of the early Judges there was no Israelitish nation. Everything seemed to be in a state of chaos. It was easier for the Israelite to run away from home than to remain there.¹⁴ Under such circumstances the Prophet by emphasizing the unity of God, and loyalty to Him, aided in changing the popular tendency from centrifugal to centripetal.¹⁵ In a few centuries Israel was transformed from a wandering horde to a monarchy.

For a time, when the Prophetic movement was new, men of a practical turn of mind conceived

¹⁴ See Expositors Bible. "Judges," p. 46 ff.

¹⁵ See Ency. Britannica. Art. "Prophet."

the idea of having schools of the Prophets. Elisha, *e. g.*, felt that the affairs of Israel demanded schools of this character.¹⁶

References to these schools are found in 2 Kings IV:1-38, 2 Kings V:22, VI:1, and 2 Kings IX:1. The mention of these schools occurs first in 1 Sam. X:5. Such schools existed down to the time of Amos. Their popularity seems to have declined as the work of the Prophet became more intensely spiritual.¹⁷ They were regarded as making the work semi-professional in character, thus tending to its degradation.

The earlier Prophets were content to deliver their messages orally.¹⁸ The later ones, beginning with Amos, felt that they should record their admonitions. When Israel was younger and the novelty of Prophecy was not worn off, it seemed to be easy for the Israelites to turn the Prophetic injunctions into deeds. The efforts of the later Prophets were not thus rewarded. This with the desire to transmit their work to posterity may have been the cause of their resorting to the pen. Budde agreeing with Kuenen says on the subject of written Prophecy: "It must have been their very ill success, the unbelief of the people, that

¹⁶ J. G. Herder holds that schools of the Prophets were wisely established by Samuel. Vol. II, p. 217-218.

¹⁷ See Schaff-Herzog, Ency. of Religious Knowledge. Art. "Prophets."

¹⁸ See Schaff-Herzog, Ency. of Religious Knowledge. Art. "Hebrew Literature"; Hastings' Bible Dic. Vol. II, p. 572.

above all else compelled them to resort to the pen. The great mass of the Prophets had no such need, for their words were turned at once into deeds as men obeyed them. But the true Prophets who had no successes in the present to record transmitted their oracles to posterity that there at least they might awaken a response or at any rate receive the acknowledgment that their contents were true."¹⁹

Coming to the time of Amos we have an advance in Prophetic power and influence, although at that time many of the Prophets had given up hope of saving Israel as a nation.²⁰ Spiritual life and personal righteousness are emphasized. To the person of limited vision God's purposes seem to be defeated. Jeremiah especially lamented over the sins of Israel and her failure to repent. He feels that she has thrown away her last hope. Subsequent events showed that his fears were well founded. (Micah I:4-9.)

If, however, national righteousness was on the wane, personal religion and spiritual faith were rapidly forging ahead. This fact is revealed in the Prophecies of Isaiah and especially in the Psalms. Had Israel remained intact as a strongly centralized government, those who composed the nation would not willingly have gone to other

¹⁹ Ency. Biblica. Art. "Prophetic Literature," col. 3855.

²⁰ See Ency. Britannica. Art. "Prophecy."

nations to disseminate the spiritual truths for the purpose for which God had raised up the Hebrew nation. With the national life destroyed and great emphasis placed on personal righteousness, when the tribes were scattered among the kingdoms of that day, God's plan for the spreading of righteousness was consummated in the largest manner. (Is. LX-LXIII.) There resulted also an added emphasis on the personal life preparing the minds of men for the coming of Him who said:

“Of how much more value is a man than a sheep?” and “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

In the later Prophets the Spirit appears as a permanent possession. (Is. LXI.) He comes now as a constant enlightenment acting through the leaders of Israel. (Is. LIX:21, Hag. II:5.) He is variously designated, and divers terms are used to express His relation to the Prophets. He “was on them,” “rested on them,” “fell upon them,” “laid violent hold upon them,” “moved them” and took hold of them. This leads us to the next statement, “that the Spirit was regarded as something external to man which was given him by God,” and hence a peculiar importance was attached to the truths gained through Him.

The influence and importance of the Prophets

continued to increase until the time of Isaiah and Micah. By their time the excitement so common to early religious movements had largely subsided, and Old Testament Prophecy was at its most useful and potent stage. Some excellencies in Prophetic style may be observed in the writings of Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk, but these were brief and did not have the reach and power of the utterances of Isaiah.

The best things must die after they have served their purpose or when conditions so change that their usefulness is past. We have seen how the Prophets were faithful in denouncing sin and how they at times hoped against hope that Israel might turn from her wickedness and remain a permanently righteous nation.²¹ In the time of Amos and Hosea, however, optimism had waned entirely, and their messages were pessimistic. The Prophets had lost confidence in the Israelites. Israel as a nation must fall, but for the individual Hebrew there will be the opportunity for a richer personal life and as a result Israel would wield a wider influence after the Captivity.²² The permanence of Israel as a nation was not so important as the dissemination of the fundamental Israelitish idea of a universal kingdom of righteousness.

The success of the Prophets prepared the way

²¹ See *Ency. Biblica*, Col. 3865.

²² *Is.* XI: 11 ff, *Ezek.* VI: 8-9, *Micah* IV-V, *Jer.* XXIII: 3-6, *2 Kings* XIX: 30-31.

for the decline of their work. When the reforms which they had suggested were adopted, or the sins which they had denounced became unpopular, the reason for their existence was not so evident. The reign of every good king helped their work to be a success and lessened the reason for the Prophets' existence. They had been faithful and God had approved their efforts. Some like Jonah ²³ might have felt aggrieved when they seemed to be compromised on account of the repentance of the people. Considering those early times, they had dealt thoroughly with the great questions of man's destiny. It remained for others to amplify and make new applications and combinations of their teachings.

²³ See Jonah III:10 and IV:1.

CHAPTER II

PERSONALITY AND WORK OF THE PROPHET

IT will help us to understand the literary structure and style of the Prophecies if we keep in mind that the Prophets were men. There have been many theories¹ of inspiration. None of these, however, will account fully for the work and writings of the Prophets. The feelings, emotions and entire personality of a writer enter into his style. Instead of dealing with doctrines, the Prophets dealt with Jehovah and His will concerning the Israelites. This made the tasks of the Prophets similar. They are to teach men how to find God, and to declare His purpose beforehand. Hence they have been compared to watchmen. Men who by extraordinary sagacity perceive the impending storm and tell how to evade it.²

In considering this subject Davidson, who treats the matter very practically, says that the important question at this time is, "In what condition was the mind of the Prophet when he received the

¹ See A. B. Davidson, "Old Testament Prophecy," p. 132 f., also Ency. Biblica, Art. "Prophet."

² See Ency. Biblica, Art. "Prophetic Literature."

truth? What was the state of mind that the Spirit craved for his work?" Because ecstasy and vision were common among oriental peoples some have held that an ecstatic condition of mind was necessary for revelations from God. This, however, is not true, for, in the case of Peter, God linked a vision of truth of supreme importance to the Gentile race, to an absorbing physical craving.³ It is claimed on good authority⁴ that critical exegesis does not favor the view that the greater Prophets considered ecstatic states the necessary guarantee of a divine revelation. Yet these states were by no means uncommon, for each of the Major Prophets refers to them. (See Jer. XV:17, Is. VIII:11, Ezek. VIII:1ff, XI:1ff, XXXVII:1ff.) The foregoing leads us to question the statements of Gardiner: "He (the prophet) was possessed by the hand of the Lord, and the words which emerged from his lips were the immediate utterance of God." "The man who utters them (the oracles of the prophets) feels that the words spring from his lips completely formed without volition of his own."⁵

If the Prophets were machines or passive receptacles of the truth or perhaps media through which the truth passed, to attribute a vigorous style to one and an inferior style to another is irrelevant.

³ Acts X:11 ff.

⁴ See Ency. Biblica, Art. "Prophetic Literature."

⁵ The Bible as English Literature, p. 245-246.

But this is not the case. It might seem to be in some instances, but Davidson holds that "the prophetic state was one of high mental activity going through various grades of intensity and of that kind of activity called intuition."⁶

Some light may be shed on this phase of the question by considering our own mental states under differing conditions. When we are seized by a new idea or some different phase of an old one, a mental glow or deep emotion often sweeps over the entire being. Again when the mind is intense, or in a wrapt spiritual or mental state, it is often unconscious of external surroundings.

Language concerning the subconscious, hypnosis, the splitting of a personality and suggestion, is common to-day. The fields of the conscious and subconscious mind are being explored as never before. People are finding that they have more in common with the spiritual than they once thought.⁷

A person in the hypnoidal condition may have ideas introduced into the mind that would otherwise be impossible.⁸ The disagreeable habit of absentmindedness is often the result of intense absorbing thought. Even as high an authority as Quackenbos⁹ would make the transliminal self

⁶ A. B. Davidson, "Old Testament Prophecy," p. 119.

⁷ See I. Coriat, "Abnormal Psychology"; also J. D. Quackenbos, "Hypnotic Therapeutics."

⁸ See Psychotherapeutics, "A symposium."

⁹ J. D. Quackenbos, "Hypnotic Therapeutics."

the direct intermediary between the soul and God. Dr. Dick makes the difference between the conscious and subconscious the same as between Paul's "mind of the flesh" and "mind of the Spirit."¹⁰ Prof. James says, "It must be admitted, therefore, that in certain persons, at least, the total possible consciousness may be split into two parts which co-exist, but mentally ignore each other and share the objects of knowledge between them."¹¹ Many striking illustrations may be produced to show the unmistakable workings of the subconscious mind.

If the success of God's work in any given period or locality does, as we believe, depend upon the perfection, the intensity, the enthusiasm of the souls through whom He works, it is fair to suppose that at least every natural means will be used by Him to prepare suitable personalities to do Prophetic work. It is a noticeable fact that no matter in what manner or condition of mind the Prophets received their truths, they were able to reproduce them. This indicates that these truths were not received in a passive, mechanical manner. This, however, does not militate against the idea of dreams as a condition of receiving the truth.¹² People in our own day have accomplished mental gymnastics in dreams that were impossible in waking hours.

¹⁰ S. M. Dick, "Psychotherapy."

¹¹ Quoted in Dick's "Psychotherapy."

¹² See S. M. Dick, "Psychotherapy."

Davidson says that the dream is the extreme illustration of the Prophetic gift. Dreams were not considered as essential by the Prophets themselves. It is significant that as prophecy declined in the times of Daniel and Zechariah there was a revival of the vision idea.¹³

Let us then make the broad statement that the Prophets manifested every kind and grade of mental activity. It went through all the various degrees of intensity; both the reproductive and creative powers of the mind were alert. The ideas and conditions that move men to-day moved them. Causes produced the same effects in their lives that they would in ours. The very personality of the Prophet assumes energy and activity in soul and body; for God never gives an empty, inactive mind, or indolent body, a special call to work for Him. Because Isaiah communed often with God and felt his personal responsibility for the condition of Israel, a call came to him.¹⁴

It may be questioned: Are we not seeking to explain away the supernatural element in Prophecy? Of what does the supernatural consist besides the power to deal with natural forces and energies in a way not thought of or not possible to mankind? Unthinking people take for granted that there can be no connection between the natural and supernatural, while as a matter of fact

¹³ See A. B. Davidson, "Old Testament Prophecy," p. 135-136.

¹⁴ Is. VI:1-8.

even "the commonest event is as supernatural in its causality as any miracle."¹⁵

The ideal Prophetic state was one of composure and calmness. Moses is a classical example of this in the Old Testament, while the Man of Galilee is the one first thought of in the New Testament. The former with his majestic dignity left his impress on the world for all time, while the latter looked down the ages and without the least disturbance of spirit uttered those mighty truths, the importance of which only eternity will reveal.

It may be quite safely stated that unpreparedness is the cause of disturbances and commotion in the minds of those privileged with special religious visitants.¹⁶ Unless there is perfect and complete consecration to the Spirit, a greater or less degree of excitation is the result. The Spirit often raised a commotion in the breast of King Saul because there were things there incompatible with His working.

In all these considerations a large allowance must be made for personal idiosyncrasies. A man like Hosea would be affected differently from one of such a temperament as Jeremiah's. Also different historical conditions would tend to develop different latent powers and possibilities.

Only those ideas which are wrought in the mind

¹⁵ B. P. Bowne, "Metaphysics," p. 289.

¹⁶ See A. B. Davidson, "Old Testament Prophecy," p. 126.

under mental pressure affect mind in a powerful manner. Novels written at the rate of a thousand words a day with but little depth of thought or anguish of emotion seldom move the world. Not a single utterance coming from the depths of the heart that deals with life conditions will the world let die. For this reason the writings of Isaiah, as well as those of Shakespeare, Tennyson and Browning, abide.

CHAPTER III

THE GENIUS AND PHILOSOPHY OF HEBREW EXPRESSION

IT was of supreme moment that the great truths of religion should be impressed on all minds, and it is significant that in the Bible may be found the five important kinds of literature,—narrative, argument, poetry, history and prophecy. These classes of literature are not only found, but an excellent type of each class is frequently manifest. Says Lowth, “Whatever should be generally known and thoroughly remembered was written in an enchanting style which was adorned with figures and told in sentences at once comprehensive and harmonious.”¹ Biblical narrative, in which history and biography are prominent, states mighty truths in a simple, dignified manner to appeal to untutored and uncultured people. In advance of the simple historical writings are the poetical books, while in prophecy the highest development of Old Testament literature is reached.²

¹R. Lowth, “Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews,” p. 52.

²J. H. Gardiner (“The Bible as Literature,” p. 127) gives as a cause for the intensity so often seen in their writings, the

The Hebrew Prophets could produce a great literature because they were able to think deeply and conclusively on the common themes of life. This sense of the immediate presence of God made the common things of life peculiarly significant. It enabled them to get a fresh vision which is often necessary for the correct expression of ordinary truths. "To the Hebrews the external universe is just a black screen concealing God. He is in all things yet distinct from them. He is in the cloud on the top of the mountain. The thunder is His voice. The sound of the mulberry trees is His 'going.' In the wind He is walking and working. At every step and in every circumstance of life the Hebrews feel the surrounding, filling influence of God."³

The Hebrews were peculiarly susceptible to the climate and scenery of their native country. The brooks of their land, the rich colors of their vegetation and the stars of their evenings were all levers with which to draw from them grand figures and images. Hills and valleys, rocks and mountains, forests and seas were to them more than common facts of every-day life.

How much Mount Lebanon and Mount Carmel

frequent and sudden changes from despair to hope. While the Israelites were prone to depart from the right, a portion of them were always thankful for deliverance from trouble. This spirit is seen especially in the language of the Psalms and renders many of them vivid and sublime.

³ G. Gilfillan, "Bards of the Bible," p. 23.

have stood for in the Prophetic Writings. The former stood for strength and majesty, the latter for fertility and gracefulness.⁴ The one symbolized the state of the Church (Is. XXXVII:9, XXXV:2); Jerusalem (Is. XXXVII:24); the King of Assyria (Is. X:34); the other stood for wealth and beauty (Is. X:18, Micah VII:14, Jer. IV:26). Rams, heifers and wild beasts are compared to her.

The fact that the Hebrews were an agricultural and nomadic race deserves careful notice. This class of people has in every age been least susceptible to corruption. When we find, as in the case of the Hebrews, these traits coupled with a dignity of soul that would not allow them to consider any person disgraced although engaged in the most menial tasks, we have a race rapidly approaching perfection. In Hebrew history we frequently read of men being called from the plow to prominent positions. (Judges III:31, I Sam. IX:3, XI:5, Amos I:1, VII:14-15.) Pursuits of this character furnished the leisure necessary for meditation which would not be possible to a commercial people.

A race capable of being so deeply moved by the common and prosaic events of life would be thoroughly stirred by extraordinary occurrences. The Hebrews were often inspired by a flood of waters.

⁴ See R. Lowth, "Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews," p. 84f.

The irregular contour of the country made these a frequent occurrence. Water in any unusual form inspired them. A vast amount of rich and sublime literature is connected with the story of the flood. Even in our day the rainbow has a kind of sacredness because of its frequent association with the Biblical account of the flood. To the Hebrews it must have meant vastly more than it does to us. "The Lord," says David, "sitteth upon the floods." Isaiah speaks in the following beautiful language concerning the compassion of God:

"This is as the waters of Noah unto me, for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should go no more over the earth, so have I sworn not to be wroth with thee."⁵

To a nation essentially religious, the priest's attire and the pomp and solemnity of the temple sacrifices would make a powerful appeal. The marble and gold, the molten sea and bulls of brass, the overshadowed mercy-seat,—all these strangely moved the Hebrew imagination. Here is a sufficient foundation for the richest prose and most sublime poetry. (Is. LXI:10, Ps. LXV:7, XCIII:1.)

The Hebrews, however, were not compelled to rely on a few sources only for inspiration. The story of the Creation profoundly moved them as it has all noble souls. Says Jeremiah (Ch. IV:23-26):—

⁵ Is. LIV:9.

I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void;
 And the heavens, and they had no light.
 I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled.
 I beheld, and, lo, there was no man
 And all the birds of the heavens were fled.
 I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness,
 And all the cities thereof were broken down
 At the presence of the Lord, and by His fierce anger.

The story of the destruction of Sodom had a similar influence on the Hebrew mind by enforcing the idea of God's power and the certainty of the punishment of the wicked. Isaiah (Ch. XXXIV:8-10) gives in this connection the following glowing word-picture:

For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance,
 And the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion.
 And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch,
 And the dust thereof into brimstone,
 And the land thereof shall become burning pitch.
 It shall not be quenched night or day;
 The smoke thereof shall go up forever;
 From generation to generation it shall lie waste;
 None shall pass through it forever and ever.

What poetic soul would not be fired by the story of the reception of the law by Moses on Sinai? "Sinai, dark and craggy, surrounded by a mantle of gloom—a fierce wind blowing around it—torrents of rain descending—the lightnings of God playing on the summit—thunders crashing incessantly—and heard at intervals above all, the very voice of the Eternal—the millions of Israel-

ites in the plain—and amid all this the one lonely man going up the hill—the utterance of the law from amid the gloom—the seclusion of Jehovah for forty days on the top of the mount—the finger of God writing the precepts on the two tables—the passing of the Lord before Moses—the descent of the favored man, with his face shining out the tidings where he had been—all this was fitted to produce a peculiar and terrible poetry.”⁶ The traditions of Horeb influenced most of the Prophets and, through their writings, the world.

The expectation of the Messiah is another potent influence in Hebrew literature. The Messiah, or some one to do his work, had been expected so long; the wrongs against humanity that he was supposed to eradicate were so many that the belief in a coming Redeemer gave hope and inspiration to the most unpoetic. Infancy and childhood meant as much to the Hebrew then as at the present time. Any cradle might contain the Messiah. When He did come, a helpless child in a manger, some of the finest poetry was written. (See Luke I:46-55, 68-80.)

The distinctive characteristics of Hebrew expression were not entirely due, however, to the foregoing causes. These were the stimuli. How did the Hebrews express their thoughts with regard to them?

⁶ G. Gilfillan, “Bards of the Bible,” p. 20.

We observe, at first, an intense religious and ethical element running through the Old Testament. This was the unifying agent making it the foundation of a great literature. One writer says, "From the Song of Deborah to Daniel the religion of Jehovah is the motive inspiring the writers."⁷ We observe further, "Religion, a particular faith developing in clearness, intensity, comprehensiveness and sublimity, binds the whole into a unity so close that to eliminate a book or a part of a book is as impossible as undesirable."⁸

The number and kind of words in the vocabulary of the Hebrews profoundly influenced their literature. Their vocabulary was not large, but expressive. The Hebrews were not far removed from nature, and were not embarrassed with a plethora of words for every idea. They were not skilled in dialectics. The sentences expressive of their emotional and sensuous life had not suffered from analysis. The essential words of their life had not lost from dissection their rhythm and fullness of meaning. Gardiner says, "In this early Hebrew poetry there is a wonderful spontaneity and freshness. It gives the impression of being born in the very heart of joy or grief or triumph."⁹ The Hebrew vocabulary contains but few abstract terms, while concrete expressions and

⁷ Schaff-Herzog, "Ency. of Religious Knowledge," Art. "Hebrew Literature."

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ "The Bible as Literature," p. 96.

words pertaining to the world of sense and material things abound. The Hebrew's language, like his life, is one of vigor and energy. Simplicity and directness characterize his utterances. Figurative and pictorial elements render them interesting.

The style is vigorous because the verb predominates. Herder, who has made a careful study of the subject, says: "The verb is almost the whole of the language. In other words, everything lives and acts. The nouns are derived from verbs, and in a certain sense are still verbs. They are, as it were, living beings extracted and moulded while their radical source itself was in a state of living energy."¹⁰ This makes the Hebrew language rich in motion, transition and endurance and "vibrant with speaking, surging life."¹¹

Another reason for the Hebrews' characteristic vigor of style is that they sought "to say the whole at once."¹² One word is frequently equivalent to four or five of ours. The important part of the word is in the center, while sonorous prefixes lend strength to the main idea.¹³

We have already received glimpses of the Hebrew's religious nature. It must not be forgotten that this was the all-absorbing element of his life. He saw religion and the sacred in everything. If

¹⁰ J. G. Herder, "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry," p. 29.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

the Hebrew was not religious he was nothing. Such a nature demanded and found a corresponding element in everything with which he associated. Every transaction, whether relating to either the civil or domestic life, must have the stamp of divine approval.

Dramatic, and to a certain degree epic poetry, require the power of objectivity for their production. This the Hebrews possessed in a very limited degree, for they were essentially introspective, subjective and individual. They desired and obtained a literature that might, through song and the dance, be intimately connected with their religion and family life. The marriage of his daughter, the death of his son, or some national triumph would be to the Hebrew an occasion for poetry (Is. V:1-2, 2 Sam. I:17-29, Jer. IX:17-20, Gen. IV:23, XVI:11 and XXV:23), and this must be lyric. Lowth says, "We may be indebted to them (the Hebrews) for the accurately measured verses and feet. There is an inherent tendency in people to make the modulation of the language, the music of the voice and the motion of the body correspond."¹⁴

The beginnings of every literature worthy the name have been in poetical form. The early history of the Persians and Arabs was in verse. The "Beowulf" of the Anglo-Saxons, the literature of

¹⁴ "Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews," p. 52.

the Trouvères and Troubadours of France, the "Cid" of Spain and the "Nibelungenlied" of Germany, were all in poetic form. The reason for this may be, as we have suggested in the case of the Hebrews, the close connection between music, religion and poetry. More than this, "in the early history of all peoples literary style must be such as to be able to reach the ear and the passions while assisting the memory."¹⁵

An important characteristic of Hebrew verse is what is termed parallelism, first discovered by Bishop Robert Lowth, in 1753. There is a sense connection or a rhyming of thought between the lines.

Parallelism requires two clauses of approximately, though not necessarily, the same length. "The two divisions of the verse confirm, elevate and strengthen each other. . . . One precept confirms the other as if the father were giving instruction to his son and the mother repeated it. . . . It varies the precept and explains, or impresses it upon the heart."¹⁶ "So soon as the heart gives way to emotions, wave follows upon wave, and that is parallelism. The heart is never exhausted; it has forever something new to say. So soon as the first wave has passed away, or broken itself upon the rocks, the second swells again and returns

¹⁵ R. Lowth, "Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews," p. 57.

¹⁶ J. G. Herder, "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry," Vol. I, p. 39 ff.

as before. This pulsation of nature, this breathing of emotion, appears in all the language of passion."¹⁷

In synonymous parallelism the sentiment of the first line is repeated or echoed in varied form in the second. The thought in the second line is not necessarily identical with that in the first, but is parallel to it:—

Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us:
Consider, and behold our reproach.¹⁸

Often the second member repeats only a part of the first:—

Woe to them that join house to house,
That lay field to field.¹⁹

Sometimes the second member contains an expansion of the first:—

Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people,
Even for salvation with Thine Anointed;
Thou woundest the head of the house of the wicked,
By discovering the foundation unto the neck.²⁰

In the second class, or anthithetic parallelism, the thought contained in the first line is confirmed by a contrasted thought in the second line. The

¹⁷ J. G. Herder, "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry," Vol. I, p. 39 ff.

¹⁸ Lam. V:1.

¹⁹ Is. V:8.

²⁰ Hab. III:13.

tenth to fifteenth chapters of Proverbs contain many examples of this class:—

A wise son maketh a glad father:
But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.²¹
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night showeth knowledge.²²

Isaiah LXV:13-14 contains an excellent example of this class. An example of climactic parallelism, a variation of the antithetic, is as follows:—

He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel:
He hath drawn back his right hand from before the
enemy,
And he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which
devoureth round about.²³

In the third class, or synthetic parallelism, the similarity of thought is not as evident as in the earlier classes. Form is prominent here rather than thought:—

The mountains saw thee and they trembled:
The overflowing of the water passed by.²⁴
Our necks are under persecution:
We labour, and have no rest.²⁵

Parallelism is an aid in making the Bible easy to translate and read. Here is found both fulness

²¹ Prov. X:1.

²² Psalm XIX:2.

²³ Lam. II:3.

²⁴ Hab. III:10.

²⁵ Lam. V:5.

and melody of expression. In this characteristic of Hebrew poetry, we find the Hebrews true to their tradition of keeping close to nature, for many have claimed to see parallelism in nature herself; e.g., winter and summer, day and night.

A significant fact is that the Hebrew nature was narrow but intense. It has ever been noted for the power of penetration which belongs to singleness of purpose. Possessed of high aspirations and noble emotions, these were not spoiled by being too extensive. The essential truth for which it stood,—the unity of God,—modified, unified and deepened, not only the literary, but every other phase of its existence.

A necessary requirement for the production of lasting poetry or any other abiding literature is deep emotion or agitation on the part of the writer. It is claimed ²⁶ that all great men of genius had emotional disturbances which affected their mental natures. Mohammed, Cromwell, Napoleon and Cæsar are celebrated instances of this. Only those truths that are deeply felt and enthusiastically expressed are capable of moving mankind powerfully. The noblest characteristics of the Hebrew race, coupled with a thorough-going consecration and sense of duty to mankind, fitted Isaiah, Hosea, Amos and Joel to write imperishable truths. The word of the Lord abideth for-

²⁶ J. H. Gardiner, "The Bible as Literature," p. 215.

ever, because there is so much in it that reaches man's deepest soul and fits his every condition. The prophecies are the highest peak in the writings of men ²⁷ because they deal most comprehensively with the problems of life and destiny.

The deep feeling, violent agitation and longing for comprehensive expression found in the Hebrew race are responsible for the figures in the Prophetical Writings. To use the language of Gilfillan, "The proof of great thoughts is, Will they translate into figured and sensuous expression? Will nature recognize, own and clothe them as if they were her own, or must they stand small, shivering and naked before her unopened door?"²⁸ Great thoughts prompted by deep emotions will carry figures without seeming to be burdened. The crying necessity for improvement in society and religion so wrought upon the sensitive souls of the Prophets that ordinary prose was inadequate to express their ideas. Instead of their figures being artificial or monotonous they were the spontaneous outburst of souls laden with the sins of the people. The connection between figures and the thoughts of the Prophets seemed necessary and natural.

Did they wish striking expressions of joy or pathos, simplicity or dignity, discouragement or

²⁷ J. H. Gardiner, "The Bible as Literature," p. 215.

²⁸ "Bards of the Bible," p. 33.

enthusiasm, figures of speech satisfied every requirement. Did they wish to inspire hope or compel regret or remorse, figures are the effective means. It would be impossible for Isaiah to express as much without the use of imagery as he does in the following phrases:—

“Laden with iniquity,” “I am full of burnt offerings,” “hands are full of blood,” “garden that hath no water,” “swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks,” “beat my people to pieces,” “draw iniquity with cords.”

In such expressions words approximate living things.

One can best judge the character of a stream by going to its source. In like manner, because we have acquainted ourselves with the characters and motives of the Hebrew people, we may more correctly estimate the writings of their Prophets.

CHAPTER IV

ISAIAH, HIS TIMES AND STYLE

WE have beheld a portion of the large number of splendid and tremendous forces that enter into the making of a Prophet. It is paradoxical that so little is known concerning the most admired, and in some respects, the greatest Hebrew Prophet. The writings of Isaiah¹ are, however, his sufficient memorial.

He was married, raised a family, and "was a citizen if not a native of Jerusalem."² This city had a marked influence on his career. George Adam Smith says Jerusalem is the "center and return of all his thoughts, the hinge of the history for his time, and the summit of those brilliant hopes with which he fills the future."³

God wished to teach Israel in the Prophetical era some needful lessons. He was aided in this

¹ Anything said here must not be understood as being opposed to the generally accepted theory of two Isaiahs. This theory helps to account for differences found in the literary style of the book. The one whose call is mentioned in the sixth chapter is referred to by us unless a statement to the contrary is made or implied.

² "Biblical Illustrator," "Isaiah," Vol. I, p. 6.

³ G. A. Smith, "Expositors Bible," "Isaiah," Vol. I.

by her two greedy and powerful enemies, Egypt and Assyria. During the major part of this epoch, Israel was able to exist only because her enemies were troubled by other nations or because she combined with other small states for mutual protection. When she enjoyed peace it was often because her enemies had grown weak. Security and prosperity always led in time through "commercial development to moral laxity and religious unfaithfulness."⁴ It was while struggling against other nations or during her moral and religious decline that the succor of the Prophets was most noticeable. Israel needed the Prophets, and because of their abandonment to her good and God's purposes they gained literary ability and moral and religious power.

Judah was more fortunately situated than Israel with regard to annoyances and enemies. She could not stand prosperity, however, but often drifted into a condition in which religion, instead of being a matter of pious fervor was one of diplomacy or political fear.

The Prophets, by their successful handling of these political and religious problems, demonstrated their capacity and capability. No other Prophet surpassed Isaiah in this important work. He was both an astute politician and a devoted religionist. He saw readily and comprehensively,

⁴ Catholic Ency., Art. "History of Israel."

the predicaments in which the Kingdom was placed. He possessed courage and reliance on God in sufficient degree to inspire others. Israel did not suffer unduly when she followed his counsel.

The sixth chapter of the Prophecies records an important experience in Isaiah's career. He was a keen observer of political situations and the noticeable difference between the beginning and termination of King Uzziah's reign "was the enfranchisement of his faith."⁵ The vision that Isaiah received gave him a distinct view of his own inconsistencies and of the sin in the surrounding civilization.⁶ Henceforth he must speak out what is in his heart.

The Isaiac Prophecies have been the literary wonder of the ages. We find in them striking evidences of unsurpassed powers of description. The ability to penetrate the thickest veil and to see conditions as they were; to peer into the recesses of the human heart; to pierce the darkness of the past, present and future—these are the reasons for this coveted power of description. (See Chs. XXXIV:11-15, XIII:19-22, X:28-32.)

The Prophecies of Isaiah exhibit throughout a wonderful energy of expression and vigor of style. Nothing is overdone. Every phase of the

⁵ G. A. Smith, "Expositors Bible," "Isaiah," Vol. I, p. 59.

⁶ See G. Matheson, "Representative Men of the Bible," Vol. II, p. 270 ff.

ubiquitous treatment of the subjects has been touched just enough. The strongest terms have been sought for and found. The leading ideas are the most profound that mankind has ever pondered;—the majesty of God (Chs. II, III, VI and XII) ; the sinfulness of men (Chs. I, III, V and XXX) ; salvation for a remnant (Chs. I, IV, XI, XIV, XXVIII, XXIX, XXXI and XXXVII) ; refuge in God alone (Chs. I, VIII, IX, and XVIII).

Glowing tributes have been paid by scholars to the writers of these Prophecies. We append a few: "I felt," says Sir Wm. Herschel, "after a considerable sweep through the sky with my telescope, Sirius announcing himself from a great distance; and at length he rushed into the field of view with all the brightness of the rising sun, and I had to withdraw my eyes from the dazzling object. So have we, looking out from our 'specular tower,' seen from a great way off the approach of the 'mighty orb of song,'—the divine Isaiah—and have felt awestruck in the path of his coming." ⁷ Ewald exalts him in the following language: "In Isaiah we see prophetic authorship reaching its culminating point. Everything conspired to raise him to an elevation to which no Prophet either before or after could attain as a writer. Among the other Prophets each of the more important is distinguished by some particu-

⁷ Gilfillan, "Bards of the Bible," p. 127.

lar excellence or some one peculiar talent; in Isaiah all kinds of talent and all beauties of prophetic discourse meet together so as mutually to temper and qualify each other; it is not so much any single feature that distinguishes him as the symmetry and perfection of the whole.”⁸ Driver says, “His literary style is chaste and dignified. The language is choice but devoid of all artificiality or stiffness. Every sentence is compact and forceful. The rhythm is stately and the periods are finely rounded. His Prophecies always form artistic wholes adequate to the effect intended, having no features overdrawn. He has the power of adapting his language to the occasion and bringing home to his hearers what he would have them understand. And he can always point to the truth which he desires to impress by some apt figure or illustration.”⁹

The rich vocabulary indicates effective literary power coupled with a full and exact command of the subject. Isaiah is fond of concrete and objective terms and expressions. The following examples will indicate this as well as his passion for imagery:—

“Oak whose leaf fadeth,” “garden that hath no water,”
“nations shall flow,” “land is full of silver and gold,”

⁸ “Propheten des Alten Bundes,” p. 166.

⁹ S. R. Driver, “Introduction to Literature of Old Testament,” p. 215 ff.

“gates shall lament and mourn,” “multitudes are parched with thirst,” “wickedness burneth as fire.”

As a rule the sentence structure of these Prophecies is simple. Some sentences begin with clauses which are followed by the main statement. Many are brief and pointed. A portion of the sentences are compound. In these coördinate conjunctions are freely used. Parallelism may be frequently seen. The following will serve as examples of the sentence structure:—

“With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked,” “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb,” “the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp,” “thou art cast forth away from thy sepulchre, like an abominable branch,” “the counsel of the wisest counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish,” “thou art wholly gone up to the house-tops,” “he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,” “I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place,” “we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement,” “I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.”

It is in imagery that these Prophecies excel. Every paragraph and nearly every verse contains some kind of figure. The Prophecies of Isaiah contain as many, perhaps, as the remaining Prophetical books.

Figures

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

A figure of Resemblance consists in pointing out or asserting a likeness between things in other respects unlike.

The Prophecies of Isaiah contain every kind and grade of figures. The larger number is classed with those of resemblance. These writings contain some of the most vigorous and graceful metaphors and similes to be found in the English language.

SIMILE

The simile is used to compare unknown with known objects or as an aid in amplifying the subject in hand. Several examples follow:—

He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball
Into a large country.¹⁰

And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place.¹¹

When Isaiah wishes to impress the manner in which God deals with the dominant heathen, he says:—

The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard.¹²

¹⁰ Is. XXII:18.

¹¹ Is. XXII:23.

¹² Is. XXIV:20.

At times he exults in the goodness of God and breaks forth in the following language:—

And Moab shall be trodden down under him,
Even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.
And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them,
As he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim.¹³

A very illuminating and familiar figure is used to teach the vanity of Israel's reliance on Egypt, and trusting in her own devices. Here, as in several places, the figures are curiously mixed:—

Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready
to fall,
Swelling out in a high wall,
Whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant,
And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel
That is broken in pieces.¹⁴

In the same chapter we have an effective figure, a mixture of simile and hyperbole:—

One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one;
At the rebuke of five shall ye flee:
Till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain
And as an ensign on a hill.¹⁵

To indicate the prosperity and illumination that will come with the return of God's grace, Isaiah says:—

Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of
the sun,

¹³ Is. XXV:10-11.

¹⁴ Is. XXX:13-14.

¹⁵ Is. XXX:17.

And the light of the sun shall be sevenfold,
As the light of seven days,
In the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His
people,
And healeth the stroke of their wound.¹⁶

The light of truth will shine with such brilliancy that the uttermost parts of the globe will be reached. These glorious conditions will prevail when God takes complete control.

An appropriate, comforting and well-known simile is found in the thirty-second chapter. It teaches in an effective manner the power of influence and personality:—

And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind,
And a covert from the tempest;
As rivers of water in a dry place;
As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.¹⁷

When the gracious reign of God shall come upon the earth:—

The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll:
And all their host shall fall down,
As the leaf falleth off from the vine,
And as a falling fig from a fig tree.¹⁸

This is more nearly literal than would at first appear. In ancient times books were made in the form of a scroll that could be rolled into small compass.

¹⁶ Is. XXX:26.

¹⁷ Is. XXXII:2.

¹⁸ Is. XXXIV:4.

In describing conditions of happiness in the future Zion, Isaiah says:—

Then shall the lame man leap as a hart,
And the tongue of the dumb sing.¹⁹

The work of the great Physician is to extend to every part of the nature,—physical, intellectual and spiritual.

In the East the quick withering of the delicate spring grass is proverbial. By many Hebrew writers “grass” is a symbol of things fleeting and evanescent. When Hezekiah prays for deliverance from Assyria, Jehovah answers, and Isaiah interprets a portion of His will in the following language; referring to the premature destruction of the Assyrians, he says:—

They were as the grass of the field and as the green herb.
As the grass on the housetops, and as corn
Blasted before it be grown up.²⁰

The following simile indicates Isaiah’s accurate knowledge of animal life. He has the naturalist’s unusually keen powers of observation.

I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion so will he break
all my bones:
Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter;
I did mourn as a dove.²¹

¹⁹ Is. XXXV:6. ²⁰ Is. XXXVII:27. ²¹ Is. XXXVIII:13-14.

A very comforting promise is the following; it is particularly beautiful and reassuring:—

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.²²

In a simile that borders on the sublime Isaiah seeks to impress the incomparable greatness of Jehovah:—

It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth,
And the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;
That stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain,
And spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.²³

The characteristic power of Jehovah is seen in the following forceful imagery:—

The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man,
He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war.²⁴

In connection with such passages, the merciful side of God's nature must not be forgotten. As every right-minded magistrate has the good of the law-abiding at heart, when he punishes a criminal, so God punishes rebellious nations for the good of His people.

A comforting promise to repentant sinners is:—

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud thy transgressions,
And as a cloud thy sins.²⁵

²² Is. XL:11. ²³ Is. XL:22. ²⁴ Is. XLII:13. ²⁵ Is. XLIV:22.

When we come to the latter part of the Prophecies, the figures are both fitting and graceful. Nothing but a great soul with wonderful vision could have produced the following:—

O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!
Then had thy peace been as a river,
And thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:
Thy seed also had been as the sand,
And the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof.²⁶

Those who trust in Jehovah are not to fear what man can do unto them. His past dealings with men indicate that He may be relied upon for protection.

Neither be ye afraid of their revilings.
For the moth shall eat them up like a garment,
And the worm shall eat them like wool.²⁷

METAPHOR

Metaphor, like simile and allegory, is founded on resemblance. It is more abridged and pointed than either of these. Clark ²⁸ says, "It multiplies meaning without multiplying words." Perhaps no more beautiful thing was ever said of any class of figures than, "Of all the figures of speech, none approaches so nearly to painting."²⁹ Metaphor

²⁶ Is. XLVIII:18, 19.

²⁷ Is. LI:7 and 8.

²⁸ "Practical Rhetoric," p. 190, Edition 1891.

²⁹ Blair's "Lectures on Rhetoric," p. 115.

reaches the depths of one's nature with few words. Isaiah has added a new importance to metaphors by a judicious use of them.

Chapter VII:18 contains a striking and very suggestive metaphor:—

“Assyria is a swarm of bees.”

In Chapter VIII:7-8, Assyria is compared to a raging stream which, like the Euphrates, overflows its banks.

Now therefore behold the Lord bringeth up upon them,
The waters of the river, strong and many,
Even the King of Assyria, and all his glory;
And he shall come up over all his channels,
And go over all his banks.
And he shall pass through Judah;
He shall overflow and go over;
He shall reach even to the neck:
And the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth
of thy land, O Immanuel.

Isaiah perceives the coming defeat of Syria and tells Ahaz that he need not fear.

In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that
is hired,
Namely, by them beyond the river, by the King of As-
syria,
The head and the hair of the feet.³⁰

A brief but classical metaphor is:—

“All flesh is grass.”³¹

³⁰ Is. VII:20.

³¹ Is. XL:6.

Others are:—

And thy neck is an iron sinew,
 And thy brow brass.³²
 And made me a polished shaft;
 In His quiver hath He hid me.³³
 For thy Maker is thine husband.³⁴

PERSONIFICATION

By this figure, according to Bain³⁵ and Blair,³⁶ "life and action are attributed to inanimate things." Personification differs from simile and metaphor in that the latter deals with resemblances between visible and invisible objects, while the former shows the relation of similarity between cause and effect.

Although this figure abounds in poetry, it is frequently used in prose and common conversation. In the "smiling of the fields" and the "thirsting of the earth" we see how almost unconsciously personification is used in daily language.

According to Blair there are several grades of personification; in one grade qualities of living creatures are ascribed to inanimate objects; e.g., "A raging storm" and a "cruel disaster." When inanimate objects are represented as those having life, we have a form of personification that is the

³² Is. XLVIII:4.

³⁵ "Rhetoric."

³³ Is. XLIX:2.

³⁴ Is. LIV:5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

life and soul of poetry. The strongest form of personification consists of objects being represented as talking or as listening while we speak. In the following brief figure there is sufficient dignity in the idea of "earth" to lend strength.

The earth mourneth and fadeth away.³⁷

In Chapter XXIV:23, Isaiah shows by an expressive figure the splendor of Christ's coming:—

Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed,
When the Lord of Hosts shall reign
In Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem,
And before His ancients, gloriously.³⁸

The ultimate triumph of the church which Isaiah sees and her joy at the complete deliverance from the power of her enemies, is celebrated by him in the following glowing imagery:—

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for
them;
And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.
It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice
Even with joy and singing,
The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it,
The excellency of Carmel and Sharon,
They shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency
of our God.³⁹

³⁷ Is. XXIV:4.

³⁸ Is. XXIV:23.

³⁹ Is. XXXV:1-2.

A very bold figure is that in Chapter V:14:—

Therefore hell hath enlarged herself,
And opened her mouth without measure.

ALLEGORY

There is much similarity between allegory and metaphor; yet it is often difficult to see the correct meaning in allegory, while a correct metaphor seldom misleads. Another kind of allegory, the parabolic, is frequently more obscure in meaning than the extended metaphor.

Isaiah uses this figure but little. It is a favorite of Ezekiel's. We will notice but two allegories in the Prophecies of Isaiah. The first is that of the vineyard signifying the Jewish church. The parable teaches that the church shall have God's mercy, loving-kindness and protection while passing through tribulation.

In that day sing ye unto her,
A vineyard of red wine.
I the Lord do keep it;
I will water it every moment:
Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.⁴⁰

The second is that of dissatisfied enemies. Again we have utterances to encourage God's children by declaring the discomfiture of their enemies.

⁴⁰ Is. XXVII:2-3.

And the multitude of all the nations that fight against
Ariel,
Even all that fight against her and her munition, and that
distress her,
Shall be as a dream of a night vision.⁴¹

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

This class of figures is based on the various associations that may arise in the mind. Many figures of contiguity are found in the Prophecies of Isaiah. The parallelism in the Hebrew Writings makes these to be favorite figures.

SYNECDOCHE

Synecdoche is defined by Bain as "putting the species for the genus, the individual for the species, the genus for the species, and the concrete for the abstract."⁴²

Figures of this kind are not plentiful. The Prophets, however, never touch this string of their lyre without bringing forth choice music.

Some select figures of synecdoche are:—

"Everlasting joy upon their heads" (Ch. XXXV:10); "the isles saw it and feared" (Ch. XLI:5); "the isles shall wait for his law" (Ch. XLII:4); "let the wilderness and the cities lift up their voice" (Ch. XLII:11); "mine arms shall judge the people" (Ch. LI:5).

⁴¹ Is. XXIX:7.

⁴² J. S. Clark, "Rhetoric," p. 197.

METONYMY

Metonymy consists in naming a thing by some accompaniment. It is a figure which may assume several aspects and is used frequently, but not excessively, by the writers of Isaiah's Prophecies. Metonymies are scattered through these prophecies like mottled beads on a necklace, each a little different from the others, but all contributing to the beauty of the whole. Out of the large number of these figures, we select a few choice examples.

In the twenty-fourth and twenty-seventh chapters Isaiah thunders out the wrath of Jehovah upon the nations. The following figure indicates its completeness:—

And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the
noise of the fear shall fall into the pit;
And he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall
be taken in the snare:
For the windows from on high are open,
And the foundations of the earth do shake.⁴³

A beautiful and discreet note of caution is sounded in the next figure. While God is punishing wicked peoples it is well for His people to abide closely by His side.

Come, my people, enter thou into the chambers
And shut thy doors about thee;

⁴³ Is. XXIV:18.

Hide thyself as it were for a little moment,
Until the indignation be overpast.⁴⁴

A beautiful and familiar passage is Chapter XXVIII:16. This figure alludes to the oriental custom of placing massive cornerstones, and a connection is made (especially by the New Testament writers) to Christ. It may be questioned whether the passage was to Christ, Messianic. It may mean that Isaiah wished to teach that only in Jerusalem was security or deliverance to be found.

Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone,
A tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.⁴⁵

Additional examples of metonymy are:—

“The bread of adversity and water of affliction” (Ch. XXX:20); the Lord’s “lips full of indignation” (Ch. XXX:27); “Ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass” (Ch. XXXII:20); “Be thou their arm every morning” (Ch. XXXIII:2); “the mountains shall be melted with their blood” (Ch. XXXIV:3); “sword shall be bathed in heaven” (Ch. XXXIV:5); “A land of corn and wind” (Ch. XXXVI:17); “from the rising of the sun” (Ch. XLI:25); “passing through waters” and “through rivers” (Ch. XLIII:2); “feedeth of ashes” (Ch. XLIV:20); “the ends of the earth” (Ch. XLV:22); “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands” (Ch. XLIX:16); “lick up the dust of thy feet” (Ch. XLIX:23).

⁴⁴ Is. XXVI:20.

⁴⁵ Is. XXVIII:16.

Each of the above figures has some special merit, adding strength, beauty or vision to the subject in hand.

Other metonymies that are so fitting as to deserve more attention than our space allows are:—

“Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged” (Ch. LI:1); “I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury” (Ch. LI:22); “buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Ch. LV:1); “Cause to ride upon the high places of the earth” (Ch. LVIII:14); “He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Ch. LXI:10); “thy land shall be married” (Ch. LXII:4); “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together” (Ch. LXV:25).

EXCLAMATION

Imagery of this character belongs only to the stronger emotions. We expect to find some in the writings of a man of Isaiah’s temperament. In this we are not disappointed. He is temperate in the use of these figures as their character demands.

When Isaiah calls attention to the value of the work of God’s messengers and to the One who is the source of their strength, he breaks forth in the following eloquent and glowing language:—

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him
that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace;

That bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation;
That saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth!⁴⁶

The Prophet has had a wonderful vision of what the church may become. In the following figure he exhorts her to come up to her privilege, "rise from the dust," break her shackles and "assert her freedom."

Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion;
Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem.⁴⁷

HYPERBOLE

Hyperbole is described by Haven⁴⁸ "as an expression which literally understood means more than the writer intends to utter." The exactness of Isaiah and the figures of the Hebrews being so closely allied to common things may account for the scarcity of hyperbole in the Prophecies. Any writer with a high sense of appropriateness would not use the figure except in connection with a noble occasion or character.

To describe the coming of Christ's Kingdom and the personality of the King, sufficiently strong language can hardly be found. In the following figure Isaiah finds comprehensive and appropriate language:—

⁴⁶ Is. LII:7.

⁴⁷ Is. LII:1.

⁴⁸ "Rhetoric."

And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
 the Mighty God,
 The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.
 Of the increase of His government and peace there shall
 be no end.⁴⁹

APOSTROPHE

This figure is closely allied to personification and is often associated with it. It is defined by Kellogg as a figure "in which the absent one is addressed as though present, and the inanimate as though intelligent and present."

The sympathy of nature with Israel is assumed in a striking apostrophe; now that Israel is redeemed nature is called upon to express her joy:—

Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it:
 Shout, ye lower parts of the earth:
 Break forth into singing, ye mountains,
 O forest, and every tree therein.⁵⁰

FIGURES OF CONTRAST

Isaiah's style does not abound in figures of contrast. He found those of similarity and contiguity better adapted to his purpose. A few well-chosen figures of this character adorn his Prophecies.

⁴⁹ Is. IX:6-7.

⁵⁰ Is. XLIV:23.

ANTITHESIS

“Antithesis,” says Bain, “consists in the explicit statement of the contrast implied in the meaning of any term or description.” It is a figure frequently found in Hebrew poetry, and is especially pointed and telling in the Prophecies of Isaiah. The following excerpts illustrate its characteristic strength.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white
as snow;
Though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool.⁵¹

And he looked for judgment but behold oppression;
For righteousness, but behold a cry.⁵²

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil;
That put darkness for light and light for darkness;
That put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!⁵³

Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry:
Behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty:
Behold, my servant shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed:
Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart,
But ye shall cry for sorrow of heart,
And shall howl for vexation of spirit.⁵⁴

INTERROGATION

A truth stated in the form of a question often acquires thereby an added strength. In no other

⁵¹ Is. I:18.⁵² Is. V:7.⁵³ Is. V:20.⁵⁴ Is. LXV:13-14.

way could one's confidence in the truth be expressed in a more cogent manner. Almost unconsciously the listener is made a partner in the discourse, and before he is aware his assent is gained. Clark thinks it is a species of anthithesis, as it "brings affirmative and negative answers into contrast."⁵⁵

Probably in no other way could the omnipotence of God be better shown than by the following interrogation:—

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,
 And meted out heaven with the span,
 And comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure,
 And weighed the mountains in scales,
 And the hills in a balance?
 Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord,
 Or being his counsellor hath taught him? ⁵⁶

Isaiah is constantly seeking to impress the people with the idea of both the ability and willingness of Jehovah to aid them.

Wherefore, when I came, was there no man?
 When I called, was there none to answer?
 Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem?
 Or have I no power to deliver? ⁵⁷

The Prophet, being sincere, cannot brook any hollow observance of a religious custom. Formal-

⁵⁵ Clark's "Practical Rhetoric."

⁵⁶ Is. XL:12-13.

⁵⁷ Is. L:2.

ism must be rebuked until all worship is from the heart.

Is it such a fast that I have chosen?
A day for a man to afflict his soul?
Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush,
And to spread sack-cloth and ashes under him?
Wilt thou call this a fast,
And an acceptable day to the Lord?
Is not this the fast that I have chosen? ⁵⁸

Zion will be enlarged notwithstanding the scoffs of her enemies. The exiles will rejoice because the offspring of Zion shall be "a nation born at once." The following interrogation suggests this in a cogent manner:—

Who hath heard such a thing?
Who hath seen such things?
Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day?
Or shall a nation be born at once? ⁵⁹

George Adam Smith⁶⁰ has drawn a contrast between the Prophecies of Isaiah and those of Jeremiah. Isaiah preached the inviolableness of Jerusalem. He persisted that Zion should not be taken, and that the people, though cut down to the roots, should remain planted in the land. Jeremiah preached a message directly opposite. "Around him the popular prophets babbled by rote

⁵⁸ Is. LVIII:5-6.

⁵⁹ Is. LXVI:3.

⁶⁰ See Expositors Bible, "Isaiah," Vol. II, p. 27.

Isaiah's ancient assurances about Zion. Jeremiah called down the storm." He predicted the speedy ruin of the temple and city, and summoned Judah's enemies against her in the name of God on whose former word she had relied for peace.

Jeremiah is the Prophet of pathos rather than Isaiah. However, when the later Isaiah does "mitigate his voice," as in the fifty-third chapter, the beautiful, sublime and pathetic are blended in exquisite harmony. Nothing can be found in all literature that is more tender and touching than the following:—

Can a woman forget her sucking child
That she should not have compassion on the son of her
womb?
Yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee.⁶¹

We agree heartily with Hastings that "Isaiah is the greatest Hebrew Prophet by strength of personality, the wisdom of his statesmanship, the length and unbroken assurance of his ministry, the almost unaided service, the purity and grandeur of style, and influence he exerted on subsequent Prophecy."⁶²

⁶¹ Is. XLIX:15.

⁶² Hastings' "Bible Dictionary," Vol. II, p. 485.

CHAPTER V

JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS

FAITHFUL people are seldom appreciated as they should be until after they are dead. Having a work to do and performing it unswervingly, it becomes popular to blame them for lack of tact or unnecessary harshness. Jeremiah belongs to this class. Perhaps no time, in this world, is propitious for a faithful servant of God; certainly the times in which Jeremiah lived were not favorable for a man of his temperament.

Son of Hilkiah, priest in Anathoth, he was called to his work in his youth, 626 B. C., "the darkest period of the kingdom of Judah."¹ Isaiah had the more popular task of preaching the inviolability of Jerusalem. When Jeremiah arrived on the scene he saw that Isaiah's doctrine had become a hindrance to the progress of the kingdom. Formalism had been bad enough in the time of Isaiah. In Jeremiah's time, however, not only was formalism rampant, but the doctrine of "inviolability" was leading to political arrogance and sure national defeat.²

¹ Ency. Americana, Vol. IX, Art. "Jeremiah."

² See "Bible as Literature," Kellner, 1896, p. 163.

Assyria had been a formidable enemy to Judah, but Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, was much more so. Jeremiah, feeling that discretion was the better part of valor, took the distasteful and unpopular course of counseling national subjection. In addition, he demanded loving kindness, justice and purity in such practical, searching exhortations that he becomes hated of all men.

Naturally he was timid and shrinking. Because he had a less pronounced personality than Isaiah he might more easily hear the voice from above, and accomplish a work impossible for that great Prophet.

We may behold another important side of Jeremiah's nature in his tender sympathy and true brotherliness. Before the time of Solomon the wounds of a friend were faithful, and they have been so ever since. Only his profound sense of duty to God and love for his people were responsible for the faithful deliverance of his message. His sympathy and tenderness were always commensurate with his severest denunciations. If he denounced the sins of his people, he did it in tears and for their good, and was always extending his hands to uplift them. If he felt that the inhabitants of Judah should be punished for their sins, he submits to be smitten, placed in the stocks and in the mire of dungeons, rather than fail to deliver his message. He keeps nothing back that

will help his people, but reveals for their good the inmost recesses of his sensitive nature. He ever watches his countrymen with a sympathetic interest, born of sincere love and keen penetration into their life problems.

The splendid faithfulness and courage of the man are seen in the fact that though he had a very sensitive and delicate nature and stood alone amidst enemies, he delivered, during forty years, messages, warnings and rebukes to a corrupt people, denouncing unfaithful priests and false prophets. Although the charge of treachery was brought against him, "he held fast to trust in Jehovah, and in the stormy sunset of Prophecy beheld the dawn of a brighter day."³

As time passed and his Prophecies were fulfilled, those whom he had befriended against their wills came to have a high regard for him. As centuries elapsed many legends of romantic character were associated with his name.

As is always the case with an author, Jeremiah's literary output is colored by his life work and the prevailing tendencies of his nature. The sympathy, tenderness and deep emotion that are so frequently manifested in his dealings with Judah, are noticeable in his Prophecy. The character and temper of no other Prophet is more completely reflected in his writings than is that of Jere-

³ Lange's **C**ommentary, Vol. XII, Preface.

miah in his strongly subjective, affecting, elegiac style which combines the truth of history with the deepest pathos of poetry.⁴

Critics do not agree in their estimate of his writings. Hastings,⁵ although paying him several fine tributes, says boldly, "We have no literature from him." This seems rather harsh, though there are good foundations for the statement. One writer⁶ claims that the book appears to be the product of writers unknown to us by name; that it is the reports and collections of oracles, prophets, historians, poets, editors and annotators. It also introduces us to a number of original prophetic authors living in later times while the editors of the book have associated with it a number of poetical passages, psalm fragments, elegies and gnomic poems. Hastings beautifully says, "The flowers of his thought reach us after being cut and pressed and the fragrance and beauty remaining faintly suggest what they were when fresh."⁷ Peake describes the style as "diffuse and pedestrian,"⁸ abounding in stereotyped formulæ and constant repetition, while no plan seems to have determined its arrangement.

Jeremiah was a Prophet of God first and a literary personage second, else he would not have

⁴ See Lange's Commentary, Vol. XII, "Jeremiah."

⁵ Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Vol. II, p. 575.

⁶ See Ency. Biblica, Column 2388, Vol. II.

⁷ Bible Dictionary, Vol. II, p. 576.

⁸ New Century Bible, Vol. I, "Jeremiah," p. 48.

waited twenty-three years after the utterance of certain Prophecies before recording them. When commanded to speak he did not wait until his lips were touched by the muse of poetry.⁹ The religious content of his oracles claimed more of his attention than their literary form. Some ideas which he regarded as fundamental are repeated to monotonousness. This, however, must be expected as, true to the Hebrew tradition, he had but one string to play on, that being—sins must be denounced and penalties foretold. Conciseness and concentration are often lacking; his transitions are frequently abrupt, while his periods are discouragingly long and his style verbose. Bewilderment attends the continuous reading of many portions of the book.

The Prophecy of Jeremiah will not receive justice if judged by its literary merit alone. In his anxiety to do for others which resulted in his life being a drawn-out martyrdom, we see the loyalty and true courage of the man. These go a long way toward compensating for any literary deficiencies. It should be said in justice to Jeremiah, that he lived at a time when language in general, although more verbose and explicit, lost in compression.

Lest we should fail to give him all the credit he deserves, we would say that his Prophecy, al-

⁹ New Century Bible, Vol. I, "Jeremiah," p. 48.

though as a whole not a literary masterpiece, contains many isolated selections of true poetic beauty. While generally not ornamented, his Writings have a richness, beauty and depth due to their sadness and fervor.

In sentences and single expressions alone does Jeremiah's claim to literary merit lie. He is unequaled in expressions of sorrow and tenderness. Observe the following:—

For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing,
 And for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation,
 Because they are burnt up so that none can pass through
 them;
 Neither can men hear the voice of the cattle;
 Both the fowl of the heavens and the beast
 Are fled; they are gone.¹⁰

It is the custom in Syria even to-day to have professional mourners. Realizing the severity of the impending blow upon Judah, Jeremiah asks in the following passage that all the mourning women come to aid in giving vent to feelings and provoking sorrow:—

Consider ye, and call for the mourning women that they
 may come;
 And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us,
 That our eyes may run down with tears,
 And our eyelids gush out with waters.

¹⁰ Jer. IX:10.

And teach your daughters wailing,
And every one her neighbor lamentation.¹¹

In the following figure the use of the term "virgin," through association, adds bitterness to Jeremiah's natural sorrow of heart:—

Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and
let them not cease:
For the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a
great breach, with a very grievous blow.
If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with
the sword!
And if I enter into the city, then behold them that are
sick with famine!¹²

In all literature there is perhaps nothing equal
in pathetic tenderness to the passage closing with
the words:—

⊙ that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain
of tears,
That I might weep day and night for the slain of the
daughter of my people!¹³

In sadness, simplicity and conciseness, nothing
is finer than:—

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are
not saved.¹⁴

¹¹ Jer. IX:17-21.

¹³ Jer. IX:1.

¹² Jer. XIV:17-18.

¹⁴ Jer. VIII:20.

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

SIMILE

Jeremiah is not so profuse with figures as is Isaiah; like him, however, figures of resemblance take precedence. He is strong in the use of simile as the excerpts will indicate. The following figure of resemblance is tinged with irony:—

And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies.¹⁵

The lack of suspicion in his character is shown by what Jeremiah says concerning the plot formed against him:—

But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter.¹⁶

A well-balanced simile reminding one of the first Psalm is:—

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters.¹⁷

The following simple and familiar figure teaches the patience of God. He will use every means to transform the characters of individuals into the condition that He desires.

¹⁵ Jer. IX:3.

¹⁶ Jer. XI:19.

¹⁷ Jer. XVII:8.

Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand,
So are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.¹⁸

The next comparison reveals something of the conscientiousness of Jeremiah. He was human and his work of faithfulness was distasteful to him, yet in the conflict between his higher and lower self the higher rules.

But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones.¹⁹

A man of Jeremiah's temperament and character could not fail to denounce false Prophets. They, by their flattering promises of peace, hinder him in the work for which he is giving his life. His words, though harsh, are potent in accomplishing a necessary work. Fire both protects and punishes:—

Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? ²⁰

Away from home the exiles are helpless and homesick, but when the restoration takes place they will have the potency of a well-watered garden.

And their soul shall be as a watered garden.²¹

¹⁸ Jer. XVIII:6.

²⁰ Jer. XXIII:29

¹⁹ Jer. XX:9.

²¹ Jer. XXXI:12.

To characterize Nebuchadnezzar and his work, Jeremiah uses the following significant figure:—

Behold, he shall fly as an eagle.²²

METAPHOR

His metaphors are rich and appropriate. True to the tendency manifested by the earlier Prophets, they are mostly drawn from things connected with the common life. Jeremiah was frequently provoked by the proneness of Judah to go into idolatry. In the following figure he likens her to a dromedary and an ass:—

Thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways; a wild ass used to the wilderness.²³

To show the base character of his enemies, Jeremiah uses the brief but expressive figure:—

They are brass and iron.²⁴

The relentlessness and courage of Jeremiah are constantly before us. Although he knew his faithful denunciations meant hatred, if not death, for him, his sense of duty constantly impelled him forward. To teach the terrible effects of sin, he represents the Lord as saying:—

And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing.²⁵

²² Jer. XLVIII:40.

²⁴ Jer. VI:28.

²³ Jer. II:23-24.

²⁵ Jer. XIX:8.

As if this were not enough, he continues:—

And they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.²⁶

The following figure is more important than its length suggests. The enemies of Israel had nearly destroyed her:—

Israel is a scattered sheep.²⁷

To exhibit the splendor and judicial purpose of Babylon the following peculiar figure is used. Neither splendor nor honor can save her from the results of her wrong-doing, as this verse shows:—

Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand.²⁸

PERSONIFICATION

We will show by the employment of four examples Jeremiah's use of personification. The beauty of the first is alone sufficient to rank him as a true poet:—

For death is come up into our windows, and is entered
into our palaces,
To cut off the children from without, and the young men
from the streets.²⁹

²⁶ Jer. XLIV:12. ²⁷ Jer. L:17. ²⁸ Jer. LI:7. ²⁹ Jer. IX:21.

To teach the seriousness of an impending judgment the writer says:—

For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black.³⁰

Warning of the impending calamity is given by the figurative use of the “wind”:—

The wind shall eat up all thy pastors.³¹

The characteristic tenderness and sympathy of the Prophet, as well as his conciseness and massiveness of thought is revealed in the following expression:—

And the land shall tremble and sorrow.³²

ALLEGORY

Jeremiah does not use allegory as much as some of the other Prophets; his parable of the good and bad figs takes rank with the best:—

The Lord shewed me and behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the Lord, after that Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, had carried away captive Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first

³⁰ Jer. IV:28.

³¹ Jer. XXII:22.

³² Jer. LI:29.

ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. Then saith the Lord unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah. . . . And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the Lord, so will I give Zedekiah King of Judah. . . .³³

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

METONYMY

In some figures of contiguity Jeremiah is especially pleasing. His metonymies are fitting and plentiful.

A fair list of them is as follows:—

“I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms” (Ch. I:10); “the young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burnt without inhabitant” (Ch. II:15); “have broken the crown of thy head” (Ch. II:16); “the lion is come up from his thicket” (Ch. IV:7); “the portion of Jacob” (Ch. X:16); “I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall” (Ch. XXIII:15); “the fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (Ch. XXXI:29).

The various invaders of Judah are characterized in an effective figure:—

³³ Jer. Ch. XXIV:1-8.

Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities.³⁴

The following figure contains a characteristic phrase of Jeremiah's. It suggests the bitterness resulting on account of sin.

For the Lord our God hath put us to silence and given us waters of gall to drink.³⁵

The gracious benefits coming to those who fulfill the conditions God imposes are stated in a charming metonymy:—

A land flowing with milk and honey.³⁶

The figure in Chapter XV:9 is another upon which the claim of Jeremiah's being a poet may be safely based.

Her sun is gone down while it was yet day.

One acquainted with conditions will not be surprised if at times Jeremiah is almost discouraged while dealing with Judah's sins. Such feeling is suggested by the following strong figure:—

The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.³⁷

³⁴Jer. V:6. ³⁵Jer. VIII:14. ³⁶Jer. XI:5. ³⁷Jer. XVII:1.

A reassuring message for Christians is found in Chapter XXXIII:15. Many have claimed to see in this a Prophecy of the Christ.

At that time, will I cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David.

Jeremiah's ability to conceive of great ideas and clothe them in simple language is manifest in this striking metonymy:—

And he shall array himself with the land of Egypt.³⁸

The hammer has frequently been associated with vigorous and continuously exerted energy (cf. Chas. Martel at battle of Tours).

How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken!³⁹

Here we have exclamation and metonymy mixed.

APOSTROPHE

One excerpt will illustrate Jeremiah's use of apostrophe.

O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet?⁴⁰

³⁸ Jer. XLIII:12.

³⁹ Jer. L:23.

⁴⁰ Jer. XLVII:6.

FIGURES OF CONTRAST

But few figures of contrast are found in the Prophecy; these, however, are choice.

EPIGRAM

In the following pungent epigram we see the tendency to point and conciseness in Jeremiah's style:—

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.⁴¹

INTERROGATION

The following interrogation strongly suggests the great privilege and exalted position of an Israelite:—

Is Israel a servant? is he a house-born slave? why is he spoiled?⁴²

If Jeremiah had ever been regarded as insincere and artificial, the reading of the following would remove that estimation:—

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?⁴³

⁴¹ Jer. VIII:20.

⁴² Jer. II:14.

⁴³ Jer. XIII:23.

IRONY

Sharp and stinging irony is noticeable in the figure which follows:—

I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.⁴⁴

The simplicity of the man deserves our attention. It was the simplicity of sincerity and lack of artificiality. He was so genuine that he would do nothing for effect. His imagination might have soared to flights of imagery, however, if he had not so keenly realized the presence of and certain consequences of the sins of his people. As it was, "His poetic flights were restrained by his presentiments; his utterance was choked by tears." Hastings pays a glowing tribute to his sombre realism and splendid dramatic power. Had he lived in a less tumultuous time and not been quite so conscientious, he would have been a poet of the first rank. As it is we have a poet with many of the finest Old Testament passages to his credit, while in majesty and sublimity of character he has but few peers in the annals of men.

⁴⁴ Jer. XXXIV:17.

LAMENTATIONS

The book of Lamentations, probably written in Judah and Babylon, consists of five separate poems dealing with the fall of Jerusalem and the sufferings of the Israelites in connection therewith. A century ago a majority of the commentators considered the book as the work of Jeremiah, although but slight evidence can be found to establish this belief. It is seriously questioned to-day whether the poems were all by the same author. It is difficult to imagine Jeremiah, disturbed as he was by the fall of Jerusalem, sitting down and writing five poems of this character.

The most interesting thing about the book is the way it is written. In connection with the practice of professional mourning there sprang up the elegiac rhythm. This suggests a union of two members in a kind of imperfect parallelism. The poems are written in either couplets or triplets in the acrostic form; each of the first, second, fourth and fifth poems having twenty-two verses, the third consisting of sixty-six verses. The fifth poem drops the acrostic structure and dirge rhythm. The third poem is the climax.

The style of this book is remarkable. It is vigorous and lively. Ewald holds that we owe a vast debt to the Captivity for some of the finest

poetry, while Lange thinks nothing quite as artistic can be found in the Bible.

Figures

The writer of Lamentations is profuse in his use of imagery. In proportion to its size, the book contains as many figures as any of the Prophecies. A few illustrations will indicate the strength of the similes.

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

SIMILE

The author feels keenly that the judgments on Zion came from Jehovah. He expresses this truth in a forceful figure:—

And he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which
devoureth round about.
He hath bent his bow like an enemy:
He stood with his right hand as an adversary,
And slew all that were pleasant to the eye
In the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured
out his fury like fire.⁴⁵

The same thought is continued as a simile in the next verse:—

The Lord was as an enemy: he hath swallowed up
Israel.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Lam. II:3-4.

⁴⁶ Lam. II:5.

The simile in Chapter III:10 shows the writer's familiarity with the earlier parts of the Old Testament. The enemy is frequently compared to a lion:—

He was unto me as a bear lying in wait and as a lion in secret places.

The appropriate figure of an ostrich that forgets her eggs buried in the sand characterizes Judah:—

The daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.⁴⁷

The following is a reflection on the leaders of Israel. The eyes of their souls have been blinded by ignorance and sin:—

They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood.⁴⁸

METAPHOR

Speaking in behalf of the nation and deploring its sins, the writer exclaims in the expressive metaphor:—

I was a derision to all my people, and their song all the day.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Lam. IV:3.

⁴⁸ Lam. IV:14.

⁴⁹ Lam. III:14.

The same idea of being the subject of the taunts of the enemy is found in the metaphor:—

I am their music.⁵⁰

PERSONIFICATION

A touching illustration of personification is found in Chapter I:2:—

She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks.⁵¹

The grievous condition of Jerusalem is brought before us in a suggestive figure:—

Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed:

All that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness. . . .

Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end.⁵²

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

METONYMY

The author of Lamentations is especially fertile in metonymies:—

“The daughter of Zion” (Ch. I:6); “Yoke of my transgressions” (Ch. I:14); “Covered the daughter of

⁵⁰ Lam. III:63.

⁵¹ Lam. I:2.

⁵² Lam. I:8-9.

Zion with a cloud" (Ch. II:1); "Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob" (Ch. II:2); "He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel" (Ch. II:3); "Stretched out a line" (Ch. II:8); "the horn of thine adversaries" (Ch. II:17); "filled me with bitterness, . . . drunken with wormwood" (Ch. III:15).

We will notice some of the metonymies in detail. An oft-quoted figure is that in Chapter III: 27. Although submission and adaptation are difficult to learn in old age, they may be learned while young under proper conditions:—

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.⁵³

The undone condition of the rich and privileged classes is forcibly expressed as follows:—

They that were brought up in scarlet embrace dung-hills.⁵⁴

EXCLAMATION

The book of Lamentations opens with a wail of distress stated in the form of an exclamation combined with personification. The word "widow" suggests desolation and misery, while the word "provinces" suggests subjection:—

How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!
How is she become as a widow! she that was great among
the nations,

⁵³ Lam. III:27.

⁵⁴ Lam. IV:5.

And princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!⁵⁵

HYPERBOLE

An excellent example of hyperbole is found in Chapter III:48-49:—

Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Mine eye trickleth down and ceaseth not, without any intermission.

FIGURES OF CONTRAST

INTERROGATION

The interrogations in Lamentations are very expressive. If Zion could only know that others had been as unfortunate, she would be comforted. The figure suggests that her circumstance is unparalleled and hopeless:—

What thing shall I take to witness for thee?

What thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem?

What shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion?

For thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?⁵⁶

The next is one of the most cutting and humiliating interrogations in the Bible:—

⁵⁵ Lam. I:1.

⁵⁶ Lam. II:13.

All that pass by clap their hands at thee;
They hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jeru-
salem, saying,
Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the
joy of the whole earth? ⁵⁷

These poems contain the very essence of the poetry of pathos in a profusion of imagery, while their technique is almost perfect. Whoever wrote them has an enduring monument to his poetical genius.

⁵⁷ Lam. II:15.

CHAPTER VI

EZEKIEL AND DANIEL

EZEKIEL

EZEKIEL was born in Judah in the reign of Josiah and was carried into captivity with the first band of exiles, when thirty years of age.¹ He entered on his Prophetic career at Chebar in 593 B. C., after Jeremiah had prophesied thirty years.

Both his labors and personality were unique because he did a successful work in the transition period between the earlier and later Prophetic conceptions. His predecessors had been either Seers or Prophets; he was both Prophet and priest. Says Prof. H. P. Smith, "Ezekiel is the most influential man that we find in the whole course of Hebrew history"; he emphasizes while he bridges the break between the older Israelitism of the past and the Judaism of the future. All that was noble among the later Jews was the gift of Ezekiel,² handed down by him as a legacy from

¹ See Lange's Commentary, Vol. XIII, p. 4.

² W. F. Lofthouse in "New Century Bible," p. 4.

the earlier ages, and transformed by him so as to persist under the changed conditions. He was the last of the Prophets and perhaps did not realize the full significance of his work and message.³ We have seen that when Israel as a nation declined the larger and decidedly spiritual Israel developed. Ezekiel was a potent factor in this development, placing great emphasis on individual responsibility. The thought of personal religion, which was budding in the time of Isaiah, grew toward maturity in the time of Jeremiah and received an added impetus through Ezekiel.

Curtiss⁴ holds that his claim to be called a great Prophet rests largely on "his adaptation both to express and to form the thinking of his time."

Ezekiel excelled perhaps every other Prophet in striking traits of personality and literary style. If Isaiah was a religious statesman and Jeremiah a religious exhorter, Ezekiel was a student. His predecessors had been speakers, he was more nearly an elaborate and polished writer.

We proceed in our study of Ezekiel with confidence because we are so well acquainted with him. He has left ample data by which to judge his personality and writings. There is a refreshing unity and orderliness about them. At the

³ See *Ency. Biblica*, Vol. II, Art. "Ezekiel."

⁴ *Bible as Literature*, p. 202.

same time they reveal a striking personality. He is at once passionate, determined and unflinching, while being tender and sympathetic.

There have been many varied estimates of Ezekiel's style. It is so figurative that most readers do not put forth the necessary mental energy to understand him, while others are rapturous in his praise. He has been likened to a comet and meteor. The intensity and strangeness of his writings remind one of Dante and E. A. Poe.⁵ He is as much at home in the use of visions and allegories as Bunyan to whom he has been compared.

In the character of Ezekiel are blended the Prophet, priest and literary artist in beautiful proportion. Each phase of his character stands out distinctly without obscuring the others. The brevity and conciseness of Isaiah appear but seldom in Ezekiel's Writings. In striving to make his periods and paragraphs correct and his thought perfectly clear, he has at times excessively elaborated.

He probably borrowed from the earlier Prophets, but left the indelible stamp of his personality on what he borrowed. If Ezekiel had not possessed true literary merit, Schiller would not have been so ecstatic in his praise, nor would Victor Hugo have classed him with Homer, Æschylus

⁵ See G. Gilfillan, "Bards of the Bible," p. 136 ff.

and Juvenal in "the avenue of the immovable giants of the human mind,"⁶ nor would Herder have called him the Æschylus and Shakespeare of the Hebrews.

Like the other Prophets, the duty laid on him was disagreeable. Being extremely sensitive, "he had to struggle against the moral and religious levity of the mass of the people; the torpor and idolatry of the principal men and the evil influences of the false Prophets and Prophetesses."⁷ Not only was his work distasteful, but like that of every true Prophet, it was not comprehended and understood, even though he sought to suppress his inmost feelings and do his work calmly. When Jerusalem fell, confirming his predictions, the people had a greater respect for the man and his message.

In the second chapter of this Dissertation we discussed the abnormal and ecstatic element in the Prophets. Ezekiel seems to have more of this than any other. Klosterman⁸ goes so far as to say that he had a form of catalepsy. This probably was not the case. The science of mind and the psychical life was not developed in Ezekiel's time, and, although he was probably abnormal at times, as most of us are, he was not conversant with nomenclature adequate to describe his con-

⁶ New Century Bible, "Ezekiel," p. 11 (note).

⁷ Ency. Biblica, Vol. II, Column 1458.

⁸ New Century Bible, "Ezekiel," p. 7.

dition. This element of abnormality coupled with the fact of his not having been present at the actual scene of history may account for the great sweeps of his imagination and the theoretical flavor of his Writings.

Ezekiel was a man of great energy of character. Having pronounced intellectual ability and being well-read, we are not surprised to find in his Prophecy a rich and varied vocabulary. If conditions call for measured methodical expression, as when dealing with the sanctuary, or rare and charming comparison, he is equal to the occasion. His being associated with scribes at the time of the exile would only strengthen his literary ability and develop peculiarities of style. His gamut of feelings and interests was extensive but not more so than his command of language. The following promiscuous list of words and phrases will show the richness of his style in these particulars:

“Calve’s foot,” “briers and thorns,” “color of amber,” “impudent children,” “adamant, harder than flint,” “went in bitterness,” “spirit entered into me,” “abominable flesh,” “a lament, an instruction, and an astonishment,” “scatter your bones,” “the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded,” “the image of jealousy,” “deal in fury,” “city full of perverseness,” “holy oblation,” “make reconciliation,” “just balances,” “sprinkle blood,” “cherubims and palm trees,” “polluted my Sabbaths,” “breaking of the loins,” “a sword is sharpened and also furbished,” “I will overturn, overturn, overturn it,” “profane wicked prince

of Israel," "infamous and much vexed," "untempered mortars," "a parable unto a rebellious house," "a couching place for flocks."

Figures

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

SIMILE

We may see in this first simile how Ezekiel borrowed from, and was inspired by, the writings in the Pentateuch: The burning bush (Ex. III:2), the pillar of fire by night (Ex. XIII:22), the fire on Sinai (Ex. XIX:8), the fire of the Lord (Num. XI:1-30).

As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps.⁹

The following figure is a cause for believing that Ezekiel and Jeremiah drew material from the same source (see Jer. XV:16). The work of the Lord may be distasteful at first but this is followed by infinite sweetness:—

Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.¹⁰

⁹ Ezek. I:13.

¹⁰ Ezek. III:3.

The following strong figure was a favorite with Ezekiel. It suggests the effect of wickedness on the life:—

All knees shall be weak as water.¹¹

The figure in Chapter XXXII:2 shows the independence of Ezekiel. Instead of obtaining his symbols, as was usual, from land animals, he chooses one from the water:—

Thou art as a whale in the seas.

The next suggestive figure shows us conditions that will obtain when Israel is renewed:—

As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men.¹²

METAPHOR

Two choice excerpts will illustrate the author's use of this figure. An apt metaphor is used to suggest the contaminating influences to which Israel had succumbed. If she submits to the "fiery trial" in the right spirit, all her dross will be consumed:—

The house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver.¹³

¹¹ Ezek. VII:17.

¹² Ezek. XXXVI:38.

¹³ Ezek. XXII:18.

Warning is given to Egypt and Pharaoh by the parable concerning Assyria. The fact of Assyria's reaching a glorious and commanding stage in her history did not deter her from falling:—

Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon ¹⁴

PERSONIFICATION

Two of Ezekiel's choice personifications are:—

The rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded.
Violence is risen up.¹⁵

This one suggests in a more vigorous manner than the language would indicate the punishment hanging over Jerusalem on account of her wickedness.

Not all of Ezekiel's figures are harsh in character. The following tells how Israel is to be renewed and blessed for Jehovah's sake:—

But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your
branches, and yield your fruit to my people of
Israel.¹⁶

ALLEGORY

It is in allegory that Ezekiel seems to delight. Says Lofthouse,¹⁷ concerning his allegories, "Now

¹⁴ Ezek. XXXI:3.

¹⁵ Ezek. VII:10-11.

¹⁶ Ezek. XXXVI:8.

¹⁷ New Century Bible, "Ezekiel," p. 10.

he carries out some lengthy symbolical action—so lengthy that we wonder if it ever really was acted.”

In the parable of the wall and untempered mortar we perceive the breadth of Ezekiel's knowledge. Here the superficial work of false Prophets is characterized in a scathing manner:—

Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar . . . that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; . . . So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar . . . and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof. . . . The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it.¹⁸

An allegory richly laden with meaning is the parable of the lion whelps. Although Israel is a lioness she has lain down among heathen lionesses and unconsciously adopted their evil traits. Another lesson (from verse 4) is that the other nations are becoming alarmed at the growing power of the Israelitish lioness. As a consequence, Nebuchadnezzar takes her to Babylon and puts her in chains:—

What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions. And she brought up one of her whelps; it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey. . . . The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they

¹⁸ Ezek. XIII:10-15.

brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt . . . then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion. . . . And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities. . . . Then the nations set against him on every side . . . he was taken in their pit. And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon. . . . ¹⁹

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

Figures of contiguity, especially metonymies and synecdoches, come from the pen of Ezekiel with readiness. To find some other name for things, to bring the spiritual and ethereal within easy range of the common mind, and at the same time couch them in poetical diction, is his forte.

SYNECDOCHE

Ezekiel has some choice figures of synecdoche. His familiarity with literary things is almost unlimited. No more expressive or suggestive figure can be found than the following:—

I will scatter your bones round about your altars.²⁰

In Chapter XVIII, Ezekiel carefully states the marks of a good man. One of them is:—

Hath given his bread to the hungry.²¹

¹⁹ Ezek. XIX:2-9.

²⁰ Ezek. VI:5.

²¹ Ezek. XVIII:7.

The author has many forceful methods of expressing himself. The thorough and irreparable overthrow of Pharaoh is stated in the following figure:—

And will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken.²²

Ezekiel evidently believed in the doctrine of hell:—

The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell.²³

METONYMY

In this oft-quoted excerpt a fine philosophical question is raised. It is difficult to get away from the question of personal responsibility for deeds done. What shall be done with the fact of the "sins of the fathers being visited upon the children"? It is a comfort to know that God is just:—

The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.²⁴

The acquaintance of Ezekiel with the Pentateuch is revealed on almost every page. Some

²² Ezek. XXX:22.

²³ Ezek. XXXII:21.

²⁴ Ezek. XVIII:2.

characteristics of the promised land may be seen in:—

a land . . . flowing with milk and honey.²⁵

In the following figure we note again Ezekiel's familiarity with the history and law of the Old Testament:—

All the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.²⁶

Other apt metonymies are:—

“Prophesy against the forest” (Ch. XX:46); “spread out my net over thee” (Ch. XXXII:3); “the fire of my wrath” (Ch. XXXVIII:19).

FIGURES OF CONTRAST

Ezekiel is not lavish with this class of imagery.

EPIGRAM

The following epigram suggests brevity rather than the over-elaboration of which Ezekiel has been accused:—

The soul that sinneth, it shall die.²⁷

²⁵ Ezek. XX:6.

²⁶ Ezek. XXIX:6.

²⁷ Ezek. XVIII:4.

Ezekiel, at that early stage in the religious life of the world, had grasped the larger and richer meaning of the words "life" and "death" in their relation to sin.

INTERROGATION

The following interrogation speaks volumes in a forceful manner:—

Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?
saith the Lord God: and not that he should return
from his ways, and live? ²⁸

Ezekiel is a first class Prophet with strong mentality. He was emotional but his feelings were subservient to his reason. The excellent arrangement found in his Prophecy leads us to believe that much thinking preceded the writing of his message. Although his style is surpassed by that of Isaiah in number and variety of figures, it has a wonderful luxuriance of detail.

DANIEL

Strictly speaking, the book of Daniel should not be among the Prophecies, for it is apocryphal rather than Prophetical. The Prophets rebuked sin, foretold judgments and promised salvation to all who would meet the conditions. The writer

²⁸ Ezek. XVIII:23.

of "Daniel" gave six narratives in the first division (Chs. I-VI) of his book and in the second (Chs. VII-XII) recorded visions of four world empires—Chaldean, Median, Persian and Greco-Macedonian, which culminated in the establishment of an eternal kingdom.

In the Prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah there is an approach to the apocalyptic style of Daniel. Although the objects presented are startling and at times poetic, there is a calm and uniform dignity in the language. Instead of being concerned about the circumstances of his times, the writer does not utter a single note of authority or use the term, "Thus saith Jehovah."

Instead of our finding in Daniel a rich, full style similar to that of Isaiah, there is artificiality and "a sounding oratorical stateliness." The book is rhetorical rather than poetic, stately rather than ecstatic, diffuse rather than pointed. It is much inferior to the other Major Prophets in depth and power, there being slight spontaneity and almost no profound play on words.²⁹

The evidence, which shows conclusively that it was written in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, may account for the indifferent style, as the style of Hebrew writers deteriorated from the time of Ezekiel. Apocryphal literature contains a larger supernatural element and is written for subsequent

²⁹ See Expositors Bible, p. 19 f. also p. 84.

times rather than the present. Bishop Westcott terms Daniel a commentator to the Prophets.

We would not underestimate the value of the book of Daniel. It contains thrilling lessons of encouragement and inspiration. It gives in Chapter XII:2 the first plainly expressed hope of resurrection. It deals in a large way with angelology and shows in a conclusive manner that the kingdom of God will ultimately triumph. However, in the matter of noble style and "intrinsic dignity and worth it is always placed by the instinct and conscience of mankind on a lower grade than such out-pourings of Divine teachings as breathe and burn through the pages of David and an Isaiah." ³⁰

Figures

After the above estimate of the style of Daniel, we do not expect many figures of speech. The figures found are neither as vigorous nor forceful as those of most of the other Prophets. A few excerpts will show the writer's use of imagery.

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

SIMILE

Referring to the punishment of King Nebuchadnezzar we read:—

³⁰ Bishop Westcott in Expositors Bible, "Daniel," p. 34.

He was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like birds' claws: ³¹

The similes in Chapter X:6 make us think of Revelation. This is the description of the man Daniel saw in a vision by the river Hiddekel. In conception it approaches the poetical:—

His body was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

METONYMY

A rather inelegant metonymy is:—

Ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a (dung-hill). ³²

EXCLAMATION

After the delivery of the three Hebrew children from the fiery furnace Nebuchadnezzar breaks forth in the following exclamation concerning God:—

³¹ Dan. IV:33.

³² Dan. II:5.

How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! ³³

HYPERBOLE

Perhaps the finest figure the book contains is the following hyperbole. It is a portion of the recital of the dream in which Nebuchadnezzar saw the overthrow of his kingdom:—

The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: The leaves thereof were fair and the fruit thereof much, and it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

The Book of Daniel was written by a man of wide outlook and broad sympathies. Being a true historian he could see a God of power and might transforming nations at His will. No pains were spared to encourage the doers of righteousness and to nerve them for their conflicts.

³³ Dan. IV:3.

CHAPTER VII

HOSEA, JOEL AND AMOS

HOSEA

HOSEA was the son of Beerī and began his Prophetic career in the reign of Uzziah. He almost startled the world with the allegory of his marriage relations which we have been taught to believe is true.

In general knowledge of his times and the various local conditions, Hosea is comparable to Isaiah and Ezekiel. He is not narrow. On the contrary, he suggests many of the doctrines which were developed more elaborately by the later Prophets.

Because of his deep emotions and the early, primeval condition of the Hebrew language, his style is laconic almost to abruptness. Jerome admires him for condensation and brevity.¹ His intense realization of the conditions in Israel, mingled with his sympathetic yearning for her welfare, forces him irresistibly forward with his mes-

¹ International Ency., Vol. VII.

sage. By every variety of image and suggestion he seeks to open the eyes of Israel to her danger. Rugged transitions, uncommon words, ellipses, inversions and collocations follow one another in rapid succession.

While his style is neither highly polished nor enchantingly rhythmical, these qualities are largely compensated for by a deep emotionalism and fatherly yearning to bless his people. Ewald sums up his style in these words: "A rich and lively imagination, a pregnant fullness of language, and, in spite of many strong figures, great tenderness and warmth of expression. His poetry is throughout purely original, replete with vigor of thought and purity of presentation, yet at one time we find the gentle and flowing predominating in his style, while at another it is violently strained and abrupt."

Hosea was a very conscientious eighth century Prophet with an intense but sympathetic personality. Correct conceptions of the functions of both the law and gospel were in his mind. The law must have its way with the sinful Israelites unless they can be made to realize the love of Jehovah and fulfill the condition for receiving that love through repentance. How tenderly he appeals to Israel (Ch. XIV) to repent, and return to God, and how he dwells and hangs upon the least sign of his people's repentance! But again the

memory of their sins cannot be obliterated and he appeals, upbraids and denounces.

Hosea's is a great soul. The judicial side of his nature is not trained at the expense of the sympathetic. He is as passionate in his expressions of tenderness as in his denunciations of sin. Mighty conceptions crowd into his mind so rapidly that he hasn't time to polish his work. His Prophecy contains something of the mourning found in Jeremiah's, yet there is at times a note of confidence not found in the message of the "weeping Prophet."

The early date of his writings accounts for the large number of unusual and uncommon words. He writes like a nervous, excited person. Observe the following:—

By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out.²

Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel.³

Come, let us return unto the Lord:

For He hath torn and He will heal us.⁴

Figures

Considering the length of his Prophecy, many figures are found. Hosea belonged to the type of men who would use imagery. Common, prosaic language was not sufficiently expressive for him.

² Hos. IV:2.

³ Hos. IV:1.

⁴ Hos. VI:1.

“His style has all the restlessness and irritability of hunger.”⁵

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

SIMILE

He has an abundance of figures of resemblance. What a strong full simile is the first!—

The number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea.⁶

A Prophet having the deep feeling and clear vision of Hosea can conceive of God punishing sinful nations in the manner of a lion. The Assyrians and Babylonians were the “lion” and “young lion” that did the effective work:—

For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion,
And as a young lion to the house of Judah.⁷

To show the unstable quality of Judah’s goodness it is characterized thus:—

For your goodness is as a morning cloud.⁸

The dove is easily caught in the net while having its interest centered on food. It is simple and has no bitterness.

⁵ Expositors Bible, Vol. I, p. 219.

⁶ Hos. I:10.

⁷ Hos. V:14.

⁸ Hos. VI:4.

Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart.⁹

One of the richest figures to be found in Hosea's writings is the simile in the fourteenth chapter. This will compare favorably with any in the Scriptures. The dew stands for moisture, fertility and fruitfulness; the lily for purity, beauty and perfume; Lebanon for stability and strength; the olive tree for spiritual graces; and Lebanon for fragrance. It is difficult to see how the goodness and tenderness of God could be stated better. This figure ranks Hosea as a great poet and a great Prophet:—

I will be as the dew unto Israel:
 He shall grow as the lily,
 And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.
 His branches shall spread,
 And his beauty shall be as the olive tree
 And his smell as Lebanon.¹⁰

METAPHOR

The apostasy of Israel is strongly suggested in the following figure:—

He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand.¹¹

PERSONIFICATION

As illustrations of personification we find these expressions: "Shall the land mourn?" (Ch. IV :3),

⁹ Hos. VII:11.

¹⁰ Hos. XIV:5-6.

¹¹ Hos. XII:7.

also "The wind hath bound her (Ephriam) up in her wings" (Ch. IV:19). Hosea's classical example of personification is:—

O death, I will be thy plagues;
O grave, I will be thy destruction.¹²

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

METONYMY

Two examples of metonymy are:—

"break the bow of Israel" (Ch. I:5); "give me my bread and my water" (Ch. II:5).

Another illustration of this class of figures is:—

For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.¹³

FIGURES OF CONTRAST

INTERROGATION

In figures of contrast Hosea's writings do not abound. Some of his most startling statements, however, belong to this class. We notice a typical interrogation. It is the final hope of Hosea for Israel.

¹² Hos. XIII:14.

¹³ Hos. VIII:7.

Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols? . . .

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?

Prudent, and he shall know them? ¹⁴

Hosea's greatest difficulty was to find words sufficiently expressive to portray the kindness and tenderness of God. Other Prophets accomplished their purposes by close reasoning and cogent logic. Hosea felt that his duty was to depict the great Father heart of God.

His style might have been stronger if his heart had not been so tender. It would not allow him to follow his lines of reason to their ultimate conclusion. He loved Israel and knew that God loved her. How he longed for her repentance. If Israel only *knew* God she would love Him.

JOEL

Three facts concerning Joel are evident: uncertainty as to the time he lived, his polished, elegant and vivid style and his deep spirituality.

As a man Joel was calm and serene. The doubts and struggles that seemed to cause the other Hebrew poets and Prophets so much anxiety did not disturb him. This may account for his neither having mentioned the Assyrians or Babylonians in his Prophecy nor charged the people with national sins.¹⁵

¹⁴ Hos. XIV:8-9.

¹⁵ Sam. Cox in *Biblical Illustrator*.

He was either the first or the last of the Prophets. If he was the earliest, the other Prophets imitated him, if the latest he imitated the others. The history of the interpretation of the book depends on whether the story of the locusts is literal or allegorical. The most modern scholarship treats the locust invasion as a real plague and places Joel after 500 B. C. His style being much more like the later Isaiah's than Hosea's also argues for the later period.¹⁶ It appears that those who place him early in Prophetic history strive to make his style similar to that of Hosea and Isaiah, and that those who would make him the last of the Prophets, as Bewer, term his style "clear, fluent and beautiful."¹⁷ It seems to us that the "blending of energy and softness is the secret of the beauty of Joel's diction."¹⁸ The bases for this lie in the individuality and personality of the man.

Although there is much difference of opinion as to the merits of Joel's Writings, many glowing tributes have been paid to the man and his style. It is "very poetic, shows great sympathy both with nature and humanity. It is pure, severe, finished, full of happy rhythms, and easy, graceful

¹⁶ Cambridge Bible, p. 24; New Century Bible, p. 3, 4, 5; Schaff-Herzog Ency., Art. "Joel."

¹⁷ J. A. Bewer, International Commentary, p. 62.

¹⁸ Lange's Commentary, Vol. XIV, p. 5.

terms.”¹⁹ “The Prophecy is full of oriental symbolism and is pervaded by a tone of solemn warning. It is gorgeous in a profusion of imagery. . . . The language is smooth and flowing.”²⁰

Bewer does not call him a great thinker but “a poet of clear and beautiful style.”²¹ The lyrical quality of some of his lines places them among the best of their kind in the Old Testament. The book is written in meter (hexameter, pentameter and tetrameter). The one most frequently used is a staccato movement of the tetrameter. He chooses expressive words from a full, diversified vocabulary.

Figures

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

Of striking imagery Joel has not an abundance. The rugged and abrupt expressions we found in Hosea are smoothed out. The love, grace, spirituality and scholarship of the man all contribute to this.

METAPHOR

We will examine his imagery by calling attention to several figures. An expressive metaphor is found in Chapter I:6:—

¹⁹ See G. A. Smith, *Expositors Bible*, Vol. II, p. 376.

²⁰ *Ency. Americana*, Vol. IV.

²¹ J. A. Bewer, *International Critical Commentary*, p. 68 ff.

For a nation is come upon my land,
Strong, and without number,
Whose teeth are the teeth of a lion,
And he hath the cheek-teeth of a great lion.

To show the desolate condition of the land after the visitation of the locusts, Joel represents the animals as feeling badly. Not only do the cattle mourn, but there is not even short grass for the flocks to nibble:—

How do the beasts groan!
The herds of cattle are perplexed,
Because they have no pasture;
Yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.²²

PERSONIFICATION

Perhaps the richest figure in Joel's Prophecy is found in Chapter II:21, 22. Here personification and metonymy are blended. The Prophet feels that God is greater than any destruction that can come upon the objects of His creation. If destruction has come, God will more than compensate for this. Even while Joel speaks, he sees the "pastures . . . spring" and the "tree bear fruit":—

Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice:
For the Lord will do great things.
Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field:

²²Joel I:18.

For the pastures of the wilderness do spring,
 For the tree beareth her fruit,
 The fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength.²³

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

SYNECDOCHE

The vividness of Joel's style is seen in the following imagery in which interrogation and synecdoche are blended:—

Is not the meat cut off before your eyes? ²⁴

SYNECDOCHE AND METONYMY

Another select illustration in which synecdoche and metonymy are mixed is found in Chapter III:18:—

And it shall come to pass in that day,
 That the mountains shall drop down new wine,
 And the hills shall flow with milk,
 And all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters,
 And a fountain shall come forth of the house of the
 Lord.

In this figure with the following verses the prosperity and riches of the Lord's land is beautifully contrasted with the desolation of secular countries.

In the Prophet Joel, sublimity, tenderness and spirituality are combined in beautiful proportions.

²³ Joel II:21-22.

²⁴ Joel I:16.

He has been called "the Old Testament Prophet of the Holy Ghost."²⁵ He has the happy faculty of portraying in glorious visions the blessed results of obedience and righteousness.

AMOS

Israel had become sinful. Pride, injustice and luxury ruled. Military prowess had robbed her of her humility and self-indulgence increased with wealth. Amos came into this situation a moral teacher and rigorous reformer and Prophet. He told the plain unvarnished truth about the facts of Israel's sin. Unless she changed greatly her immorality would cause her downfall. In a courageous manner he relentlessly denounced the nobility. G. A. Smith says, "Into politics he brings facts, into religion vision," while Cornill calls him "one of the most wonderful appearances in the history of the human spirit."

Amos is to be remembered as the first Prophet who committed his Prophecies to writing. Although they show cultivation and refinement their excellencies are probably the result of the great natural ability of the man combined with thorough consecration.

"The style of Amos corresponds with his temperament and message."²⁶ He has not been

²⁵ F. C. Cook, Explanatory and Critical Commentary.

²⁶ Biblical Illustrator.

spoiled by the schools nor by the prosperity and idolatry of the people. His heart was right, therefore his vision was keen. Being courageous and having the ability to see clearly, he states his message in a terse, graphic, vigorous manner. His sentences are "firm and sharp." His poetry is at times "austere and occasionally savage."²⁷ In rugged, grand and striking sublimity he is seldom surpassed by any other Prophet. Like Ezekiel, he delights to reiterate choice and telling phrases, e. g. :—

"For three transgressions and for four," "Yet have ye not returned to me, saith the Lord."

Jerome terms him "rude in speech, but not in knowledge." If there had been a little more of the sympathetic element in his nature some of the disagreeable bluntness might have been avoided. His work, however, was not to be done in a smooth, agreeable manner. Israel needed to be aroused by "short threatenings, short prayers, sudden exclamations, and startling questions." Although not a school man, he had read widely and was a "master of the language he used." A fine literary climax in his Prophecy is Chapter III:3-8, and in Chapter IV, verses 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, may be found a splendid example of refrain.

²⁷ G. A. Smith, *Expositors Bible*, p. 72.

Figures

The Prophecies of Amos abound in original, lofty imagery. The boldness of his style indicates the nature of the man.

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

SIMILE

One would scarcely find a more original and telling simile than:—

And ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning.²⁸

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

METONYMY

In the following figure the asperity and impatience of the Prophet are evident. The term "kine" is suggestive of the weaknesses of the women of Samaria:—

Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountains of Samaria.²⁹

A well-known metonymy is that concerning the plumb-line. The inhabitants of Israel are all to be tried by the same rule:—

²⁸ Amos IV:11.

²⁹ Amos IV:1.

Then said the Lord,
Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people
Israel:
I will not again pass by them any more:
And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate,
And the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste.³⁰

Amos' stern denunciation of the vices and luxuriousness of the rich Israelites is portrayed in the following figure of contiguity:—

And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house;
And the houses of ivory shall perish,
And the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.³¹

FIGURES OF CONTRAST

INTERROGATION

In the following interrogation Amos suggests in his own startling manner that all effects have causes. He is justifying himself for uttering Prophecies concerning Israel:—

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?
Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey?
Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he hath taken nothing?
Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him?
Shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

³⁰ Amos VII:8, 9.

³¹ Amos III:15.

Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not
be afraid?

Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done
it? ³²

Unlike Hosea, Amos' tenderness of heart did not affect his style. When occasions demanded it, he told truths concerning the sinfulness of the people and the righteousness of God. Jehovah could be satisfied only with spiritual sacrifices. Though such teaching might antagonize the Israelites, it was for their good.

Amos exhibits a mastery of Hebrew expression. Being a careful observer of social and political life, he had a message, which is a prime requisite for a good style.

³² Amos III:3-6.

CHAPTER VIII

OBADIAH, JONAH, MICAH AND NAHUM

OBADIAH

A BOOK with only twenty-one verses must be remarkable in some particular to have withstood the ravages of time and to have obtained a place in the Scripture Canon. It deals only with the "doom upon Edom and exultation in its overthrow." "There is no spiritual message," "no word of sin or righteousness, or mercy."¹ It contains no allusion to the descent of the author, his birth-place or fortune. There is much dispute concerning the time of the Prophet; some putting him early and others late.

Obadiah had but one purpose and his severely plain but energetic diction is in harmony with it. The "graphic descriptions," "striking pictures," "quick exclamations" and "impassioned warnings throbbing with anger and sorrow"² indicate the strongly passionate nature of the man. The second part of the Prophecy (Vers. 10-21) is not as

¹ Expositors Bible (1903), "Minor Prophets," Vol. II, p. 178.

² J. A. Bewer, International Critical Commentary, p. 13.

forceful as the first (Vers. 1-9), although the words are full of meaning. His few words suggest many thoughts and are a memorable rebuke to fraternal hardness of heart.”³

The language of the book is simple, pure and idiomatic. It is never monotonous and is often poetic. The arrangement is good and a sequence of thought runs through the whole.

Figures

A few figures will show Obadiah’s facility in imagery.

An excellent example of synecdoche is:—

They that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee:
There is none understanding in him.⁴

To show the completeness of the fall of Edom, a telling interrogation is used:—

If thieves come to thee, if robbers by night (how art
thou cut off!)
Would they not have stolen until they had enough?
If the grape gatherers came to thee,
Would they not leave some grapes?⁵

The Prophecy is somewhat ambiguous, for the writer undertakes to handle a question (the conflict between Edom and Israel) that cannot be

³ G. Gilfillan, *Bards of the Bible*, p. 178.

⁴ Obadiah, Verse 7.

⁵ Obadiah, Verse 5.

adequately treated within the small compass of the book.

JONAH

One of the most abused and misunderstood books of the Bible is that of the Prophet Jonah. The reason may be that it contains so much that is distasteful to modern life. In every age there have been people who wanted to get away from duty and God; who could see nothing beyond their own narrow sphere; who cared but little whether the world is saved or not; who could see no goodness in any people that didn't belong to their sect; who needed to be taught concerning the humanity of God.

For a book to have been written before the time of Christ which has the originality of thought and breadth of conception exhibited here, is little less than marvelous. Jewish legalism and bigotry receive a telling blow in this Prophecy. We get the first intimation that the soul of the Gentile as well as that of the Jew may be saved—that God is no respecter of persons. The missionary idea is taught as plainly as anywhere else in the Bible. Another lesson is that nothing will broaden a person so much as working for God.

Although the book contains but little true poetry and few figures, it is interesting from the literary viewpoint. Every word is suggestive and

is freighted with meaning. In directness and swiftness of execution the Prophecy reminds us of the book of Job.

The style of the book belongs to the later Hebrew. This may account for its finished character.

Figures

A common figure of personification is found in Chapter I:15:—

The sea ceased from her raging.

The book contains several rather prosaic interrogations and closes with one of the best.

The writer of the book of Jonah is a word-painter of extraordinary ability. How rapidly the pictures pass before us. The fleeing man, the storm, the fish, the repentant city, and the gourd. The Book is a constant rebuke to narrowness and contains many well-taught lessons.

MICAH

Micah's is one of the truly great minor Prophecies. A younger contemporary of Isaiah, Micah is only partially eclipsed by this prince of Prophets. The problems for the Prophet in Micah's time were the same as those in Isaiah's. He faced them in a manner which indicated that he

had all the qualities of the true Prophet—personality, spirituality, courage, faithfulness and vision.

Two parties in Jerusalem were proving the weakness of King Hezekiah. If Micah had been so disposed, he might have played a political rôle similar to that of Isaiah. He didn't do this, however, preferring to confine his labors entirely to the realm of the ethical and religious. Something must be done to correct the conception that the people have of God. Through contact with worldly powers God's people were becoming commercial. Power was more important than character and ritual was taking the place of spirituality. With the other Prophets, Micah seeks to elevate the idea of God, knowing that this is the best way to raise the standard of life.

Two facts lent strength and gave breadth to Micah's labors: First, he understood the common people and their needs, and was their champion. Second, his nature was comprehensive; "he had Amos' passion for justice with Hosea's heart of love."⁶ To serve his country and his God well was Micah's highest ambition, and he allowed no seeming worldly good to stand in the way of its attainment. He was brave, and the story of his fearlessness lived on (Jer. XXVI:17-19), a "bea-

⁶ J. M. P. Smith, *International Critical Commentary*, p. 18.

con light to check the vicious and cheer the brave.”⁷

The style of Micah is also the delight of lovers of literature. His vocabulary is rich and complete while condensation of language, force and picturesqueness with deep feeling and logical development may be noticed everywhere. In his writings Micah is not governed by formal rules. He is too energetic, impulsive and excitable. The rugged and abrupt character of his message is greatly modified by his “plastic choice of words,” and many artistic turns of expression. The plan of his discourses is easily discovered, showing symmetry and regularity.

Figures

We can easily conceive how a person of Micah’s temperament would receive pleasure from the use of figures. The character of the man is revealed in his many expressions noted for fine poetry, rugged majesty and lofty spirituality.

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

SIMILE

To indicate the utter desolation of Samaria the Prophet uses the following simile:—

⁷ New Century Bible, “Minor Prophets,” p. 225.

Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field,
And as plantings of a vineyard.⁸

A richer simile which reminds one of the language and spirit of Hosea is:—

And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many
people
As a dew from the Lord,
As the showers upon the grass,
That tarrieth not for man,
Nor waiteth for the sons of men.
And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the
Gentiles in the midst of many people
As a lion among the beasts of the forest,
As a young lion among the flocks of sheep.⁹

A pointed simile is:—

The best of them is as a brier.¹⁰

Whether the briars symbolize things that are harsh, catching and holding all that pass by, or what is worthless, the figure thoroughly accomplishes its purpose.

METAPHOR

An expressive metaphor is:—

For I will make thine horn iron,
And I will make thy hoofs brass.¹¹

⁸ Micah I:6.

⁹ Micah V:7, 8.

¹⁰ Micah VII:4.

¹¹ Micah IV:13

To teach a characteristic of the coming Prince of Peace (reminding us of Isaiah) he writes:—

And this man shall be the peace.¹²

Micah has something of the vision of Isaiah concerning the coming Redeemer. To banish distress and give gladness and true discernment he says:—

When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.¹³

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

METONYMY

The boldness of Micah's style may be seen in the second verse of the first chapter. He feels that his utterances should command the attention of the earth. The way Israel listens and obeys will have much to do with the future of the kingdom of God. Hence he says in bold metonymy:—

Hear, all ye people;
Hearken, O earth, and all that therein is.¹⁴

With some of the other Prophets he bewails the fact that Israel has not repented of her sins.

¹² Micah V:5.

¹³ Micah VII:8.

¹⁴ Micah I:2.

He feels that the day of grace is past, hence he says:—

For her wound is incurable.¹⁵

The officials and people in authority have not paid sufficient attention to Israel's condition, so he admonishes them:—

Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob,
And ye princes of the house of Israel.¹⁶

The following metonymy may refer to a village near Bethlehem as the probable birthplace of the coming Messiah, or to the fact that royal power shall be restored to Jerusalem:—

And thou, O tower of the flock,
The stronghold of the daughter of Zion,
Unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion.¹⁷

To make a deeper impression if possible upon the entire people he uses these words:—

The Lord's voice crieth unto the city.¹⁸

A figure suggesting caution:—

Keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.¹⁹

¹⁵ Micah I:9. ¹⁶ Micah III:1. ¹⁷ Micah IV:8. ¹⁸ Micah VI:9.

¹⁹ Micah VII:5.

A beautiful and comforting metonymy is:—

Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage.²⁰

APOSTROPHE

As an example of apostrophe the following is one of the best:—

Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy,
And ye strong foundations of the earth.²¹

FIGURES OF CONTRAST

INTERROGATION

To show that mere quantity and sacrifice do not please God, but rather the devotion of the heart, the Prophet uses the following figure—a blending of interrogation and hyperbole:—

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
Or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ²²

Hardly too much praise can be given to Micah's literary style. He is a "worthy companion of Isaiah." In the plan, proportion and symmetry of his Prophecy, he is ideal. The last two chap-

²⁰ Micah VII:14.

²¹ Micah VI:2.

²² Micah VI:7.

ters contain some of the finest passages in the Bible.

NAHUM

This Prophecy stands for intensity, but not for breadth. The heinousness of Nineveh's sin has seized the soul of the Prophet and he can think of but little else. In the first chapter he speaks in a general way of God's judgments on the world. In the following he discourses to Nineveh alone and seems to triumph and exult over her fall. J. M. P. Smith²³ calls him "narrow and shallow" and G. A. Smith says, "A worse Prophet than Zephaniah with less conscience and less insight."²⁴ He forgets the sins of his own people and makes no mention of repentance. Unlike Hosea, he paints only the jealous and avenging attributes of God.

The remarkable element in the book is the style of the writer. His Prophecy is one concentrated shout possessing unity of subject and design. Originality, vivacity, fancy and realism are a few of the characteristics of the impassioned oratory so evident everywhere.

The language is strong and brilliant, forcible and graphic. Other Prophets uttered great moral and homiletical truths, but not Nahum. He even

²³ J. M. P. Smith, *International Critical Commentary*, p. 281.

²⁴ *Expositors Bible*, "Minor Prophets," p. 88.

lays aside particles and not a single unnecessary word is allowed to interfere with the purpose of the work, to grip and influence the reader, who is persuaded that the transactions are actually taking place before his face.

Bishop Lowth says, "Of all the Minor Prophets none seems to reach the sublimity, the fire and the daring spirit of Nahum."²⁵ As a poet he is of the first order. Archaic and sonorous forms are frequent and the lines are short and quick.²⁶ Nineveh must fall amid pomp and poetry.

Figures

A slight study of the Prophecy will convince one that its author is no novice in the use of imagery. Every figure has point and adds strength to the whole.

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

SIMILE

To impress upon the Ninevites their hopelessness, he says concerning the chariots of the enemy:—

They shall seem like torches,
They shall run like the lightnings.²⁷

²⁵ Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Vol. III, p. 476.

²⁶ G. A. Smith, Expositors Bible, "Minor Prophets," Vol. II, p. 88.

²⁷ Nahum II:4.

To teach the contaminating influences of Nineveh the Prophet says:—

But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water.²⁸

The ease with which Nineveh may be destroyed is thus stated:—

All thy strongholds shall be like fig-trees with the first ripe figs.²⁹

An original figure is the following which teaches the impotency and uselessness of Assyrian officers in the day of calamity:—

Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers.³⁰

In all these figures Nahum “sticks to his text” that Nineveh must fall and be utterly ruined.

METAPHOR

In the following metaphor Nahum seeks to impress the truth that those who trust in God need not fear Him—only His enemies:—

The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble.³¹

²⁸ Nah. II:8. ²⁹ Nah. III:12. ³⁰ Nah. III:17. ³¹ Nah. I:7.

PERSONIFICATION

The following personification has the manifest object of bringing terror and dismay to the inhabitants of Nineveh by impressing on their minds the number of the besiegers:—

The chariots shall rage in the streets.³²

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

HYPERBOLE

Again the Prophet seeks to discourage the Ninivites and make their overthrow imminent. This time, however, he uses hyperbole:—

And there is none end of their corpses.³³

FIGURES OF CONTRAST

INTERROGATION

To impress the severity of Jehovah the striking interrogation is used:—

Who can stand before his indignation?

And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? ³⁴

The style of Nahum is narrow and pointed. He feels deeply that Nineveh must be overthrown. This thought he seeks to have not only the Ninivites but everybody else believe.

³² Nah. II:4.

³³ Nah. III:3.

³⁴ Nah. I:6.

CHAPTER IX

HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH,
MALACHI

HABAKKUK

HABAKKUK prophesied about 600 B. C. He marks the beginning of a new school of religion in Israel. Other Prophets addressed Israel on behalf of God; he speaks to God on behalf of Israel. They were so exercised over Israel's sin they pronounced dooms and proclaimed an offer of Grace.¹ Habakkuk wanted to know why God permitted tyranny and wrong. He apparently failed to see that He could bring good out of evil. The earlier Prophets attack sin while he deals with life. They are negative while he is positive. The distinctive teaching of the book is "the just shall live by his faith" (Ch. II:4).

Habakkuk's motto seems to have been, "Not how much but how well." This noble, daring spirit proved himself a master of everything he

¹ See G. A. Smith, Expositors Bible, "Minor Prophets," Vol. II, p. 130.

touched. When he cries to God, the Almighty answers in no uncertain manner. His command of language is excellent. Both his thought and expression are poetic.

His style is the embodiment of boldness, sublimity and majesty. Here we find some of the finest parallelisms. "It is impossible in translation to reproduce the abounding alliterations of the original or the prevailing poetic measure consisting of three principal words in a line."² There is also the dramatic element in the questioning and complaining of man and the threatening answers of God.

Some have held that from a literary point of view Habakkuk was dependent on Isaiah and had a close affinity with him.³ Others maintain that his words are rare and original and that he is independent of earlier models.⁴ Probably the poetic soul of the man fed on and assimilated everything good that he could find. Hence when he wrote his style was rich and elegant.

Figures

A man of Habakkuk's temperament could not be unpoetic if he would. Words and imagery in his soul struggle for utterance. His work is to

² W. H. Ward, *International Critical Commentary*, p. 5 ff.

³ *Ency. Biblica*, Vol. II, Art. "Habakkuk."

⁴ *Schaff-Herzog Ency. of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. V.

choose the best. Chronology, geography and nature are all placed under tribute to serve his lofty purpose.

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

SIMILE

The first simile reminds us of Jeremiah who prefers the eagle in figures of comparison:—

They shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.⁵

To show the seeming helplessness of the people and to strengthen his remonstrance in their behalf, he compares them to fish:—

And makest man as the fishes of the sea.⁶

A vigorous and expressive simile is:—

Who enlargeth his desire as hell,
And is as death and cannot be satisfied.⁷

As we progress in the book the figures become richer:—

And his brightness was as the light.⁸

To show his confidence in God, how He will make His people superior to their enemies, he uses the figure:—

And he will make my feet like hinds' feet.⁹

⁵ Hab. I:8.

⁷ Hab. II:5.

⁹ Hab. III:19.

⁶ Hab. I:14.

⁸ Hab. III:4.

METAPHOR

A choice metaphor that shows the writer's acquaintance with the Psalms is:—

The Lord God is my strength.¹⁰

PERSONIFICATION

Habakkuk excels in personification. To show the horror and wrong of the Chaldean's oppression he pictures inanimate things as crying out:—

For the stone shall cry out of the wall,
And the beam out of the timber shall answer it.¹¹

No more beautiful imagery can be found than:—

The perpetual hills did bow.¹²

It is figures like the following that cause Delitzsch to say concerning the entire Prophecy, "It is classical throughout, full of rare and select words and turns, which are to some extent exclusively his own, whilst his view and mode of presentation bear the seal of independent force and finished beauty. Notwithstanding the violent rush and lofty soaring of his thoughts his Prophecy forms a finely organized and artistically rounded whole."¹³

¹⁰ Hab. III:19.

¹¹ Hab. II:11.

¹² Hab. III:6.

¹³ Lange's Commentary, "Minor Prophets," p. 3.

The mountains saw thee, and they trembled:
 The overflowing of the water passed by:
 The deep uttered his voice,
 And lifted up his hands on high.¹⁴

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

METONYMY

In "transgresseth by wine" (Ch. II:5), and "buildeth a town with blood" (Ch. II:12), the writer shows his command of metonymy.

FIGURES OF CONTRAST

EPIGRAM

A complete study of Habakkuk's style cannot be made without referring to epigram. Two illustrations of this have become proverbs; the one secular, the other religious:—

That he may run that readeth it.¹⁵
 But the just shall live by his faith.¹⁶

This book is as fine in diction and style as any of the other Prophecies. The final ode will not suffer by comparison with the best Psalms.

ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah came of royal blood but did not inherit excellent literary ability. Other Prophets

¹⁴ Hab. III:10.

¹⁵ Hab. II:2.

¹⁶ Hab. II:4.

are noticeable for some great outstanding quality. Zephaniah possesses neither a great imagination nor a consuming love for humanity.¹⁷

He was the legitimate successor of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah. They had plead, but now the evil must be separated from the good, and Zephaniah, by his insistence on "The Day of the Lord," did his part fully. George Adam Smith places him and his message in an odious light. He says,¹⁸ "There is no hotter book in the Old Testament; neither dew nor grass nor tree lives in it, but it is everywhere fire, smoke and darkness, drifting chaff, ruins, nettles, salt-pits and owl and ravens looking from windows of desolate palaces."

His Prophecy is deserving of credit for the following reasons: (1) It gives a good statement of the social conditions in the years preceding the exile. (2) It is pervaded by a distinct and profound ethical and moral tone; (3) He is among the first to announce a universal judgment.

There is disagreement as to the value of his style. Hastings says¹⁹ that "on the whole it is clear and forceful with several striking figures." Another writer claims that his work is largely bor-

¹⁷ See S. R. Driver's *New Century Bible*, "Minor Prophets," p. 104 ff.

¹⁸ G. A. Smith, *Expositors Bible*, "Minor Prophets," Vol. II, p. 48.

¹⁹ *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, p. 976.

rowed.²⁰ There are, however, remarkable passages in his Prophecy, e.g. : "I will search Jerusalem with candles" (Ch. I:12). The description of the day of the Lord has also appealed to many people:—

That day is a day of wrath,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of wasteness and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
A day of the trumpet and alarm
Against the fenced cities, and against the high
towers.²¹

Figures

METAPHOR

Chapter III:11-13 has been regarded as very beautiful, also the closing passage, Chapter III: 14-20. A significant metaphor is:—

Her princes within her are roaring lions;
Her judges are evening wolves.²²

If Zephaniah had been positive rather than negative, humble instead of austere, his usefulness would have been greatly augmented. As it is, he faithfully warned a thoughtless people and brought to the notice of the world for all time the idea of a universal judgment.

²⁰ Ency. Biblica, Vol. II. ²¹ Zeph. I:15-16. ²² Zeph. III:3.

HAGGAI

Born in Babylon in the time of the Captivity, Haggai was the first to prophesy after the Return.²³ He was the man of the hour because he stood for the performance of duty rather than the attainment of fame. He was a success in that he saw the accomplishment of what he undertook. Unless the temple had been rebuilt the continuity of the religion of Israel could not have been maintained. Haggai saw this and acted accordingly. His command to rebuild moved the hearts of the people and they put their convictions into action.

The rebuilding of the temple is the burden of his Prophecy. He announces, however, the great ethical principle that evil is more infectious than holiness, and in his final prediction foreshadows the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom.

The style of Haggai does not compare favorably with that of the other Prophets. Some have excused its dullness by maintaining that his messages, as we have them, are only the outlines of original utterances which have not been revised by some later scholar. There are a few telling passages:—

Ye have sown much, and bring in little;
Ye eat, but ye have not enough;

²³ See *Ency. Americana*, Vol. VIII.

Ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink;
 Ye clothe you, but there is none warm;
 And he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put
 it into a bag with holes.²⁴

As a whole, the style of Haggai is prosaic. It may be characterized as weak in expression with too frequent repetitions. He lacked imagination and poetical power.

Figures

Few figures of speech are found in his message. He is partial to interrogation and seeks to give energy to his addresses by this figure chiefly.

SIMILE

The signet-ring among the Orientals signified value. Hence the following simile has a special meaning:—

And will make thee as a signet.²⁵

METONYMY

Metonymy is found in Chapter 11:21:—

I will shake the heavens and the earth.

Some have thought that this figure points to the coming of the Messiah and the establishment

²⁴ Haggai, I:6.

²⁵ Hag. II:23.

of His kingdom. Great agitation accompanied the giving of the law on Sinai and the sending of the plagues to the Egyptians. The next "shaking" will occur during the reign of the Messiah under the spiritual dispensation.

INTERROGATION

Hoping to stir the pride of the people with regard to the house of worship Haggai breaks forth in the following interrogation:—

Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses,
And this house lie waste? ²⁶

As if he had seen the first temple,²⁷ he says:—

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first
glory?

And how do ye see it now?

Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? ²⁸

A brief but suggestive interrogation is found in Chapter II:19. As an incentive to work Haggai promises material prosperity:—

Is the seed yet in the barn?

Yea, as yet the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate,
and the olive tree, have not brought forth:

From this day will I bless you.

²⁶ Hag. I:4.

²⁷ Ewald infers from Chapter II:3 that he had seen the first temple.

²⁸ Hag. II:3.

Haggai aimed at results and obtained them. Simple and plain speech accomplished his purposes. That was all he wished. He, with Zechariah, realized that the coming of the Lord was soon to take place. He sought to keep this expectation before the people.

ZECHARIAH

Zechariah was a man of influence and a leader of the people and a true Prophet. Simple and practical in his life, he cared nothing for the reputation of originality but was anxious about his reception as a Prophet.

In conjunction with Haggai he played an important part in reviving the faith of the discouraged remnant of God's people. They not only succeeded in getting the temple rebuilt, but also had an important place in beginning its liturgical services. Two characteristics of the Prophecy are visions²⁹ and angelology.³⁰

Zechariah gives a large place to the Spirit and His work. The Golden Age will come when man coöperates with God by obeying the promptings of the Spirit.

²⁹ Moulton says, "The seven fold vision of Zechariah is beyond any Prophecy of the Old Testament in the demand it makes upon the imaginative powers." "Short Introduction to Literature of Bible," p. 308. (1901.)

³⁰ The belief in Angels received a decided impetus during the exile. Zechariah introduces orders and ranks among them.

There is such a marked difference in style between the first eight chapters and the remainder of the book that many critics hold that at least two men must have written it. In general, it may be said that the visions contain the prose, and the Prophecy the poetry of the book. The style of the first division shows individuality, unity and sequence. These chapters "are made up of three Prophecies. The first is a general manifesto of this Prophet's message. The third is an elaborate response to a formal inquiry on the subject of fast days. Between these is found a Prophetic composition of great literary importance."³¹ That of the second division is more direct, purer, softer and richer. Chapters IX-XI contain as fine passages as are found in Hebrew poetry. The apocalyptic style which has been noticed in Daniel was a favorite with Zechariah. This may be a reason why his style is considered involved and redundant and why Lowth says of Zechariah, "who of all is perhaps the most obscure."

Figures

There is a variety and richness of imagery found here as the figures will indicate. To show that mere wordly wisdom is ineffectual, the Prophet says:—

³¹ Moulton's "Short Introduction to Literature of Bible," p. 308.

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

SIMILE

And Tyrus did build herself a stronghold,
 And heaped up silver as the dust,
 And fine gold as the mire of the streets.³²

To suggest the unbounded success of God's people, Zechariah uses another effective simile:—

And they shall drink and make a noise as through wine;
 And they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of
 the altar.³³

To continue the idea of God's care and blessing, the Prophet says:—

And the Lord, their God, shall save them in that day as
 the flock of his people:
 For they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an
 ensign upon his land.³⁴

To indicate the coming power of Judah and to show how easy and complete shall be her victories, we have another simile:—

In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a
 hearth of fire among the wood,
 And like a torch of fire in a sheaf.³⁵

³² Zech. IX:3.³³ Zech. IX:15.³⁴ Zech. IX:16.³⁵ Zech. XII:6.

A beautiful simile showing what tribulation does for Christians is:—

And I will bring the third part through the fire,
And will refine them as silver is refined,
And will try them as gold is tried.³⁶

METAPHOR

A suggestive metaphor indicating how completely and carefully God will protect Jerusalem and how He will manifest His glory in her is:—

For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round
about,
And will be the glory in the midst of her.³⁷

PERSONIFICATION

Zechariah is particularly felicitous in his use of personification. It adds greatly to the energy of his style. To indicate the self-satisfied condition of Jerusalem the Prophet says:—

We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold all the earth sitteth still and is at rest.³⁸

Although the Israelites are restored to their own land they are not free from trouble. Evil shepherds cause them to be threatened with judg-

³⁶ Zech. XIII:9.

³⁷ Zech. II:5.

³⁸ Zech. I:11.

ments. If the trees wail the impending calamity must be terrible:—

Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because all the mighty are spoiled:

Howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.³⁹

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

SYNECDOCHE

God is such a good protector that even the Israelites in tents shall be saved. God's love is unchangeable for all who trust in Him. The following synecdoche declares this:—

The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first.⁴⁰

In the "mourning of the land" we have a figure often used by the other Prophets. In this personification and synecdoches are included.

METONYMY

Zechariah's first vision is one of encouragement. Zion was comforted by the rebuilding of the temple. The metonymy is apt and appropriate:—

And the Lord shall yet comfort Zion
And shall yet choose Jerusalem.⁴¹

³⁹ Zech. XI:2.

⁴⁰ Zech. XII:7.

⁴¹ Zech. I:17.

The chastisement of the heathen (represented by Philistia) is prophesied in the next metonymy:—

And I will take away his blood out of his mouth,
And his abominations from between his teeth.⁴²

An oft-quoted figure is the next. It looks back to the Levitical law (see Numbers VIII:7 and XIX:9) and forward to the efficacy of the blood of Christ (see 1 John I:7).

No better cause for shouting can be found than the one suggested in the following figure. With keen Prophetic vision Zechariah sees the opening events of the week in which Christ was crucified. The import of his message is also suggested. This is another instance in which exclamation and metonymy are mixed:—

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;
Shout O daughter of Jerusalem:
He is just and having salvation;
Lowly, and riding upon an ass,
And upon a colt the foal of an ass.⁴³

One peculiarity of the Book of Zechariah is the style of direct address. Another is his prediction of the sanctification of Israel through the outpouring of the Spirit. (Ch. III:4, VI:6, V:5-11, VIII:16-17.)⁴⁴

⁴² Zech. IX:7.

⁴³ Zech. IX:9.

⁴⁴ See Ottley, "Hebrew Poets," p. 83 ff.

MALACHI

Because the word Malachi means "my angel or messenger" many have concluded that no such man ever lived, but that the book was written by Ezra.⁴⁵ Notwithstanding this, we have the book in the Scripture Canon written about 420 B. C. We judge from its contents that the writer had an important mission which was well discharged. Though he was with the minority he spoke out faithfully against sins both of omission and commission. The earlier Prophets had denounced the wicked because of their sinfulness; the writer of Malachi denounces not only this class but also the pious because of their forgetfulness. He maintains that God is worshiped even among the heathen and that the reason His people are not blessed is that they do not put away their abuses and pay their religious dues.⁴⁶

Malachi, with the other post-exilian Prophets, emphasizes the ritual in worship. He insists, however, on the spirit of reverence and worship. With true Prophetic instinct he peers into the future and mirrors with wonderful clearness the coming of Christ and His forerunner (see Ch. III:1-4).

⁴⁵ S. R. Driver, *New Century Bible*, p. 297; also *Expositors Bible*, Vol. II, p. 334.

⁴⁶ See J. A. Smith, *Expositors Bible*, p. 338, Vol. II.

The style of the book has been adversely criticized.⁴⁷ While it is not the finest poetry, it has purity, earnestness and originality that command respect. He makes his point through logic rather than by appealing to the emotions. His sentences are so compact that in a small compass we have a comprehensive view of contemporary religious conditions.

Other writers have been termed obscure, but that charge cannot justly be laid to this writer. He not only answers the objections of his opponents in an orderly and direct manner, but even raises supposed objections which he proceeds to refute. Because of the changes in civilization and in the attitude toward religious questions, the writer of Malachi could not employ the literary methods of Isaiah or Ezekiel. He must be a teacher. We have noted an apocalyptic trend in the Prophecies of Daniel and Zechariah; here, however, is a resemblance to the scholastics of the Middle Ages. "Some see in it (his style) the beginning of the method of exposition which afterwards became universal in the schools and synagogues of Judaism."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Lowth says, "Malachi is written in a mediocre style." Gesenius regards him "decidedly inferior to the earlier writers." Kohler on the other hand considers his style "forcible, and remarkably pure for the time." Ewald says "it is not lacking in smoothness and elegance." (J. P. Lange, *Minor Prophets*, Vol. XIV, p. 4, "Malachi.")

⁴⁸ Hastings' Bible Dictionary, p. 218.

Figures

Malachi is not strong in the use of imagery. He employs enough, however, to indicate a many-sided literary ability.

FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE

SIMILE

He indicates the refining and purifying characteristics of the coming Messiah by the use of the following effective simile:—

For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope;
And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.⁴⁹

Malachi has a vivid conception of the judgment—the time when the evil shall be permanently separated from the good—the former destroyed, while the latter shall prosper. In support of that belief he says:—

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven;
And all the proud, yea, all that do wickedly shall be
stubble.⁵⁰

The same idea is continued in the following verse:—

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise
With healing in his wings;
And he shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Mal. III:2-3.⁵⁰ Mal. IV:1.⁵¹ Mal. IV:2.

METAPHOR

The idea which is couched in simile in the foregoing excerpt is in the same verses and the following expressed in metaphor:—

All the proud, yea and all that do wickedly shall be
stubble.⁵²
And ye shall tread down the wicked;
For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet.⁵³

FIGURES OF CONTIGUITY

METONYMY

A reassuring promise and oft-quoted metonymy is:—

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse,
And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts,
If I will not open you the windows of heaven,
And pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room
enough to receive it.⁵⁴

A very comforting promise is made to God's faithful children. This also is in the form of metonymy.

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts,
In that day when I make up my jewels.⁵⁵

⁵² Mal. IV:1.

⁵³ Mal. IV:3.

⁵⁴ Mal. III:10.

⁵⁵ Mal. III:17.

FIGURES OF CONTRAST

INTERROGATION

Malachi's favorite figure is pointed interrogation. Observe the following:—

If then I be a father, where is mine honour? ⁵⁶
 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil?
 And if ye offer the lame and sick is it not evil? ⁵⁷
 Have we not all one father?
 Hath not one God created us? ⁵⁸
 But who may abide the day of his coming?
 And who shall stand when he appeareth? ⁵⁹
 Will a man rob God? ⁶⁰

It would be difficult to write interrogations having more point and significance than these. It would also be difficult to find a book in the Old Testament of the size of Malachi, having a style so rich and so diversified. This book with the Prophecy of Jonah may well mark the transition between the Old and New Testaments.

⁵⁶ Mal. I:6.⁵⁹ Mal. III:2.⁵⁷ Mal. I:8.⁶⁰ Mal. III:8.⁵⁸ Mal. II:10.

CONCLUSION

THE truths of the Bible have received the prayerful attention of the devout scholars of every age. Because of various linguistic and hermeneutical obstacles, commentators and redactors have, in some instances, complicated rather than clarified Biblical truths. Generally, however, their supremely devout object to discover God's thought and purposes has resulted in great benefit to the race.

Feeling that the truths they were chosen to interpret should be stated in an attractive form they have spared no pains from the rhetorical standpoint. On the other hand, realizing that the weal or woe of some or many individuals might depend on the interpretation of a single word, they have striven for the best hermeneutical standards. Being the best from both the literary and religious viewpoints, it is not surprising that so many superlative statements have been made concerning the Book.

The magnificent grandeur and stately, sweeping progress of the Pentateuch is replaced in the early historical books, by a concrete and familiar

handling of the underlying principles of humanity's existence and progress. During the process of leading His chosen people and developing a Hebrew nation, God is the embodiment of patience. Often, through the mouths of His Prophets, He threatens and forgives. He is a loving God and must give Israel every chance to repent.

The historical books are followed by the poetical. Here, in felicitous periods, the heights and depths of the soul's experiences are expressed. Truly, "deep calleth unto deep." Great advances are made in showing the comprehensiveness of God's love. There is no sin that God will not forgive. There is no stain that He will not wash away when proper contrition is made. In these books we get foretastes of truly Christian teachings.

The Prophecies, in some respects the connecting link between what precedes them and the New Testament, contain the cream of all that precedes. From this time forth the thoughts of the people are not only objective but subjective. Having eyes and ears alert to everything that would assist them in their important work, the Prophets browsed among the mighty truths of the Pentateuch until they were saturated with its spirit and teachings.

Some of the Prophets proclaimed a universal salvation. They had so much of the Spirit of God that they could not remain narrow. They

indicated by word and deed that they longed for the realization of the Christian ideal. When God wished to have large religious and moral conceptions clothed in attractive garb, he called an Isaiah. Jesus Christ, the Consummation of Prophecy, came when the thinking and praying people of the world realized that art, culture and philosophy could not save them. To prepare for His coming there must be the work and sacrifices of many "John the Baptists." The Prophets did to a large degree this preparatory work.

It is remarkable that some of the Prophecies expressed the idea that the world is arranged on a plan in which the salvation of the people is the main feature. Mighty empires totter to their downfall and haughty kings are dethroned because they are out of harmony with this plan.

If some of the Prophecies are difficult to comprehend, that is another argument in their favor. The Prophets were trying to lift the people from a condition of spiritual infancy to one of spiritual manhood. By their efforts in this direction they have furnished the world with a valuable means of intellectual improvement. The most helpful truths of life do not lie on or near the surface. The effort necessary to find them furnishes the required mental exertion for healthy intellectual growth.

We read in one place¹ the ease with which the avenue to divine truth may be discovered and retained. This statement was never intended to excuse students of the Bible from the responsibility of thinking, searching and judging. The Bible is not designed to minister to the lazy. It does, on the other hand, reward painstaking study.

God might have devised a plan to give man lumber without his cutting it, ore without digging it, crops without their being planted. He did not do this, but rather planned for him to put forth the energy necessary for his own development. The law of labor that obtains in the physical universe applies with equal force to the spiritual and intellectual realms. The Prophets by their faithful and self-sacrificing labors performed not only services of inestimable value to their own people, but also taught great ethical truths and furnished mental and spiritual food for all time.

¹ Is. XXXV:8.

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